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# The Teaching of Our Lord

BY

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## PREFACE

THIS little book is an attempt to provide intelligent readers with an account of our Lord's own teaching. It is based on a thoroughly scientific study of the Gospels in the light of modern research. The author has tried to avoid all desire to attain apparent simplicity at the expense of truth, or to represent ingenious conjecture as genuine criticism. The Gospels are repeatedly quoted throughout the book in a manner which is intended to help those who wish to read the New Testament seriously and systematically.

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# THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD

## CHAPTER I

### THE METHOD OF CHRIST'S TEACHING

**How Christ taught.**—The Gospel of Jesus Christ was not at first a book, but a spoken message in which heart spoke to heart. He might have written a collection of laws such as we find in the Hebrew books of Deuteronomy or Leviticus. He might have written a book of wise Hebrew proverbs, or a volume of moral philosophy. But He seems to have left behind Him no single page. Only once is it recorded that He wrote a sentence, and it was written on the dust (*John* viii. 6). The teaching contained in our four Gospels is His preaching seized at the moment, treasured in some faithful memory or other, and written down at different periods within about fifty years after His death. Sometimes we feel compelled to wonder how much of His teaching has been lost, and sometimes we wonder at the marvel that so much has been preserved.

All the sayings of our Lord which we now possess might be slowly read within the space of two days, and it is more than probable that a vast number of sayings have been left unrecorded. And yet we possess so much. The period of His teaching was less than three years, whereas Isaiah and Jeremiah, the greatest of the Hebrew prophetic writers, worked and preached for more than forty years. But those two spaces of forty years are filled with comparatively few separate discourses and incidents. On the other hand, the short ministry of Jesus Christ is crowded with life and movement. And the actual words which are recorded, though few in number, are clear and strong as diamonds. They are themselves the secret of their own preservation, and they also preserve for us a true portrait of Jesus Christ. Perhaps men will always in some degree understand our

Lord differently. The writers of the New Testament themselves understand and interpret Him differently. This does not mean that they do not understand Him truly. His words show Him to be so unique and so truly divine that every man who has the spirit of moral intuition and the spirit of prayer finds in Jesus all that is best and highest for himself. And all such will say to Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life' (*John* vi. 68). Sometimes a great genius like Shakespeare has such an insight into the varieties of human nature that he is able in a few hundred lines to create a clear impression of the characters which he has invented. But only of Jesus can we say that His own few sayings leave us with the certainty that He is above all time and change, and that history seems already to verify His words, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.'

'Never man so spake' (*John* vii. 46) was the verdict of those who heard the Lord Jesus. He employed several different methods of teaching, but in all these methods we find a freshness and a force which are unique. His teaching is natural as well as supernatural, and authoritative as well as informal.

**The Men who heard Christ.**—Why, then, did the Jews oppose and kill Him? To answer this question it will be necessary both to show by instances how our Lord used the Old Testament, and to estimate the whole nature of His teaching. We must know something of all His work if we are to understand why men opposed Him then, and why they oppose Him now. But first it will be useful to fix our attention on the Jews of Palestine. It is hardly necessary for us to consider the Jews of the *Diaspora* (dispersion) scattered outside Palestine among different heathen populations. These Jews are important and interesting in many ways, and especially for the manner in which they prepared for the spread of Christianity and the development of some parts of Christian theology. But it was with the Jews of Palestine itself that our Lord was concerned, and therefore we must devote ourselves to this portion of the race alone.

1. **The Sadducees.**—The origin of the name 'Sadducee' is still obscure. But there is no doubt as to the views

and aims of the Sadducees. They were both priests and aristocrats, and formed a small but powerful political party. The high priests were Sadducees. They had an intense dislike of novelty, and wished to maintain their own authority. They specially revered the Pentateuch. The peculiarities of their doctrine were negative. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, and denied the resurrection, personal immortality, and the future life. Their temper was worldly and materialistic, and our Lord warned His disciples against it. They demanded to know His authority (*Mark xi. 27*), sought to destroy Him, and tried to compromise Him in the eyes of the Romans by asking Him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar (*Luke xx. 22*). And they vainly tried to discredit His teaching by proposing to Him a riddle about the resurrection (*Matt. xxii. 23*). Their whole rationalistic attitude, like their comfortable circumstances, made them inclined to oppose the new Prophet.

The **Herodians** seem to have been a political party anxious to support the rule of the Herods, and therefore anxious to suppress any agitation in favour of the Messiah. This accounts for their uniting with the Pharisees to secure the overthrow of our Lord (*Matt. xxii. 16*). Their principles were probably nearer to those of the Sadducees than those of the Pharisees.

2. **The Pharisees.**—This party represented the essence of patriotic Judaism. They were called 'Pharisees,' or 'separated,' because they separated themselves from the Sadducee court party between B.C. 135 and 105. They added to the Pentateuch many traditions, most of which the Sadducees rejected. They held elaborate doctrines about immortality and good and evil spirits; they believed a doctrine of predestination resembling that of St. Paul; they believed in God's government of His special people; they were active missionaries, and they formed a separate society or confraternity of their own. To this party belonged most of the Scribes, or professional students of the Jewish law (see p. 5). Along with a considerable amount of superstition they maintained most of what was good in Judaism. But they illustrate admirably the way in which the good may become the enemy of the better. The desire to keep Judaism unde-

filed by heathenism caused them not only to make their ceremonial stricter and stricter, but to treat with the most contemptuous scorn the so-called 'people of the land,' who were ignorant of Pharisaic traditions. And their anxiety for the victory of God's cause made them expect a material national kingdom under a Messiah who would not suffer, but would reign gloriously over His people.

Nothing can be clearer than the causes of the opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus Christ. They opposed Him because He disregarded both the Jewish law and their own traditions, mingling freely with Samaritans, tax-gatherers, and social outcasts. What they reckoned as defilement, He regarded as a solemn duty. Secondly, they opposed Him because He taught that He was the Son of God and Messiah, and a suffering Messiah. The divine authority which He claimed over the affairs of men, and His assertion that He worked miracles as the Son of God and by the Holy Spirit, aroused their strongest antagonism. He disregarded their Sabbath rules, and forgave sins. He set aside their whole theory of 'separation,' and their theory of the kingdom of God; and did it as being one with God himself.

The Zealots were the most extreme and violent Pharisees, prepared to take an active part in overthrowing Roman rule. One of the Apostles was a member of their party (*Matt. x. 4; Luke vi. 15*).

3. The 'People of the Land.'—This title was given at this period to the common people, more especially those of the country districts. Just as the word 'pagan' first meant the people who lived in villages, and then acquired a religious meaning, so it was with this Jewish phrase. It was used by the Pharisees to signify the 'uncultured,' and so 'irreligious.' The Pharisees regarded them with a detestation which is exactly reflected in the saying, 'This multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed' (*John vii. 49*). The rabbis accuse them of not paying tithes, not wearing phylacteries, etc. Even at their worst they were to Jesus 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (*Matt. x. 6*). And it is not hard to believe that in secluded regions, such as the hill-country (*Luke i. 39*) of Judæa and Galilee, there were many simple God-fearing hearts. To the Pharisees they would seem

barbarous, and even wicked. But they were 'the poor in spirit' beloved by God, wistfully looking for the consolation of the Messiah's coming. Such were Zacharias and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna. And such most truly were Mary and Joseph, as we find them depicted in the Gospels.

4. **The Essenes.**—Near the Dead Sea there were the settlements of a sect called Essenes. They were influenced by some forms of Oriental paganism, especially Persian. They had their goods in common, and led a severely ascetic life. They greatly revered the sun, and practised ceremonial washings of a more than Pharisaic minuteness. It is doubtful whether our Lord came into direct contact with them.

**Our Lord in the Synagogues.**—Our Lord began His ministry in Galilee by 'teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom' (*Matt.* iv. 23). In the synagogues, so long as they were open to Him, He would take a text from the Old Testament and make this text the subject of His address. St. Luke has graphically described to us the scene at Nazareth, where 'he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.' He opened the Book of Isaiah, and chose as His text the words :

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor :

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty them that are bruised ;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'

Then we are told how He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, sat down, and explained that this scripture was fulfilled in His own teaching (*Luke* iv. 16-30).

His teaching in the synagogues challenged attention and opposition. 'They were astonished at his teaching : for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes' (*Mark* i. 22). In the Judaism of this period the Scribes were indispensable and almost ubiquitous. They lectured on the law, they taught it to their pupils, and they administered it in the Sanhedrin and other courts. They behaved as aristocrats of sacred learning



among the country people who 'know not the law.' But they could not speak with that solemn sense of a direct divine commission which marked the words of Jesus; and the punctilious care which they gave to developing and filling up the law, accumulating precedents and working out deductions, was so different from His method that it prejudiced them against Him.

**The Parables.**—Perhaps the most characteristic method of our Lord's teaching is to be found in His parables. It is very remarkable that there is no parable in the New Testament except in the Gospels. The early Christians seldom attempted to imitate the parables of their Master. And when they attempted, they failed. The parables of the Old Testament are very few and comparatively poor; those of the Jewish rabbis are not worthy to be compared with those of Christ. A parable uses some event in nature or in human experience in order to convey some religious truth. There are three kinds: (*a*) those in which some fact in the outward world is mentioned to illustrate a religious principle. These are brief and undeveloped parables, parables in germ. Such are the sayings: 'They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick' (*Mark* ii. 17); 'No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment' (*Mark* ii. 21). Sometimes these are simply 'maxims' of condensed moral truth (*Matt.* xv. 14). There are (*b*) short stories told to make some moral precept clearer. The four best examples of this kind of parable are the story of the good Samaritan, of the man who trusted in his riches, of Dives and Lazarus, and of the Pharisee and Publican (*Luke* x. 29-37; xii. 16-21; xvi. 19-31; xviii. 9-14). There are (*c*) the parables of the ordinary kind, vivid, glowing pictures, full of life and interest, such as the parable of the sower going forth to sow, the labourers in the vineyard, and the prodigal son. These two latter kinds of parable, (*b*) and (*c*), are the only 'parables' in the modern English sense of the word. Both compare some fact of the spiritual life with some parallel fact in natural life. But they differ, because the first kind simply uses a scene or story to suggest some great principle, while the second kind draws a fuller parallel between the two. Parables like those in the great series in *Matt.* xiii. are stories which



are acted on two different stages at the same time. On the lower stage we see sowing wheat, harvest, and fishing; on the higher we see the process by which Christ saves our souls.

Were the parables ever enigmas?—The teaching of our Lord was intended to teach and help every one who was willing to be taught, and was ordinarily simple as well as profound. A great deal of difficulty has therefore been felt with regard to the words recorded by St. Mark after the parable of the sower:

‘And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables. And he said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them’ (*Mark* iv. 10-12).

Some critics have supposed that these texts do not accurately represent our Lord's teaching, and some have gone so far as to say that they were invented in order to find a reason for the unbelief of the Jews and their rejection by God. But such explanations as these become quite unnecessary when we understand the circumstances in which St. Mark records these words.

The Scribes, Pharisees, and Herodians had already to a great extent rejected our Lord. They had practically put themselves ‘without,’ outside the kingdom of God, as they were trying to put Him outside their synagogues and to destroy Him. The greater part of the ‘multitude’ were also still outside, they were not able to understand ‘the mystery of the kingdom of God.’ No one regretted their hardness of heart so truly as Jesus, no one was so willing to explain the truth as He. But His teaching about the inward and spiritual coming of God's kingdom and the gradual nature of its growth, was totally different from the popular conception. The people expected some outward and sudden change. The disciples were slowly learning to appreciate the group of secrets connected with the coming of the kingdom and its signs. Others had not the same moral capacity for the truth. Therefore they only saw the parable and not the secret,

they saw the story which moved on the lower stage, but not the drama of the soul. Thus the warning of Isaiah was fulfilled, and they were not converted (*Isa.* vi. 9-10). The lesson is the same as that taught in St. John's Gospel (xii. 46-48). The Son of Man did not pass any outward final judgment on those who heard Him. His word judged them automatically. The food which was meant for their life became for them the means of destruction when by self-will or sloth they counteracted its effect. It is the same whenever we misuse the great forces of nature. Electricity and heat can be used for life or for death.

In *Matt.* xiii. 11 ff. this teaching of our Lord is presented in a slightly different form. He does not lay stress upon the result so much as the fact of the people's failure to understand. He speaks of teaching in parables *because* they do not understand, whereas in *Mark* He speaks of their only seeing the outward story with *the result that* they could not understand. And in *Matthew* He adds the words: 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.' There will always be something esoteric in the teaching of our Lord. Only he 'that hath ears to hear' will hear. That there is a real mystery about the laws of God's kingdom and the means by which it is to come, is surely proved by the fact that earnest men have not wholly agreed as to those laws and means. And yet it remains true that the nearer men live to Jesus, the more they understand the mystery. It was His desire that men should grow in understanding, and therefore we are told 'with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it' (*Mark* iv. 33).

Parables in St. John's Gospel.—There are some parables in St. John's Gospel which are called by another Greek name (see *John* x. 6; cf. xvi. 25, 29). They employ a method of comparison by which our Lord reveals some great feature of His character or Person. In this way He describes Himself as the Good Shepherd, the Door of the sheep, the Vine, and the Light of the world. In these sayings the metaphor and the object described by it are blended together, as a painter might mix two or more colours to represent a single flesh-tint. They are

what we should call in modern language, allegories. Thus, when our Lord calls Himself 'the Door of the sheep,' He means that it is only through Him that we can enter into the Church of God.

**Discourses in St. John's Gospel.**—St. Justin Martyr, an important Christian writer who was born near A.D. 100, describes part of Christ's teaching in the following sentence: 'The words that He spoke are short and concise; for He was not a sophist.' It has often been argued that this description does not apply to the discourses of Christ in St. John's Gospel. These discourses have been represented as long monotonous arguments which are mere variations of a particular doctrine about our Lord's divine nature. It is even said that if He uttered the short pithy sentences which He utters in the other Gospels, He could not have spoken as He speaks in the fourth Gospel. And we are told to make our choice, and warned that if the sayings in the other Gospels are genuine those in the fourth Gospel are invented.

All this criticism is exaggerated and prejudiced. St. John never pretends that he is doing more than giving a selection of our Lord's doings (see xxi. 25). And, as a matter of fact, the actual sayings in *John* are no longer than those in *Matthew*. They also include a very large number of pithy, pregnant sayings such as, 'Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise' (ii. 16); 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst' (iv. 14); 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (viii. 32). St. John never represents our Lord as talking like a professional Greek debater or orator. Nor are these discourses really monotonous. They have been condensed and shaped to some extent by the evangelist's own spiritual experience. But they are true discourses of Jesus, in spite of the fact that we are sometimes left in doubt as to where the evangelist's record ends and his own reflection on that record begins (an instance is in iii. 27-36). To accuse them of monotony is like complaining of the monotony of the sky with all its delicate changes of movement and colour. Certainly there is no monotony in a dialogue such as our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, or His words with the Jews about

circumcising on the Sabbath day, or His answer to their charge that He is possessed by a devil, or to their claim to be Abraham's children. And the longer discourses, such as that in the synagogue in Capernaum in chap. vi. and His last discourses with His disciples in chap. xiv.-xvi., are wholly worthy of our Lord. It is quite true that the simple moral teaching of the other Gospels is left behind, and doctrinal teaching about the relation between Christ and His followers is in the foreground. But it was natural that one form of discourse should have been used by our Lord to supplement the other.

The other evangelists record the failure of the mass of the people to understand the meaning of the parables. And this prepares us naturally for the fact that in the fourth Gospel a misunderstanding on the part of His hearers is the occasion of the continuance of the discourses related by St. John. Nicodemus does not understand how a man can be 'born again' (iii. 4), the Jews do not understand how Jesus is the Bread that came down from heaven (vi. 41), or how Abraham has already seen His day (viii. 56 f.). All this is probable. On the one hand there was His perfect intuition into heavenly things, and on the other hand their crude and carnal understanding. And as in St. Mark's Gospel Jesus asks even His own disciples, 'Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand?' (viii. 17, 18), so it is here. His gentle rebuke of Philip (xiv. 9), and of Thomas (xx. 27), show that it is the same Master speaking to the same men who were so 'slow of heart.'

**Paradoxical and Symbolic Language.**—The characteristics of two different types of the teaching given by our Lord require special notice. The first is His use of language which must have arrested attention, and still arrests attention, by its bold and forcible nature. Its very boldness and unexpected form necessarily suggest new truth. Such sayings are not only strong but also illuminating. 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted'; 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon' (*i.e.* riches); 'Many are called, but few chosen,' are instances of the simpler kind of His wise sayings. Still stronger and stranger are such sayings as—'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it'; 'If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke

also'; 'If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' This language is partly symbolic. The truth is embodied in a form which arrests attention, and each one has to consider the lesson which this form is meant to convey personally to himself. Still more symbolic are the sayings in which our Lord declares that the right eye must be plucked out, or the right hand cut off, if it causes us to stumble (*Matt. v. 29*). Our Lord means that nothing, however close or dear, must be permitted to influence us, if its influence hinders our spiritual progress. In the same way He speaks of faith as able to remove a mountain (*Matt. xxi. 21*). By this He means indeed that His immediate disciples will be given a great power of commanding physical nature, as proved to be the case. But His words also imply that through the strength gained by faith and prayer we can accomplish what appears to be impossible in spiritual matters.

A second characteristic is that our Lord, living as a Jew among Jews, accommodated His language to their comprehension. His language is essentially Jewish. And the fact that the evangelists record it in a Jewish form is a plain proof that the teaching of Jesus is not the invention of a later period. For the Church soon became far more Greek than Jewish. And no Greek would of his own accord have represented Christ as using such distinctly Hebrew phrases as 'I beheld Satan fallen from heaven' (*Luke x. 18*), or 'Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (*Matt. xix. 28*); and we may be sure that no Greek would have invented the passage where our Lord makes use of the popular Jewish distinction between Jews as 'children' and Gentiles as 'dogs' (*Mark vii. 27*). Our Lord uses the ordinary language of His contemporaries. But He repeatedly uses it in order to put a new meaning into it. Sometimes, in fact, it is merely a necessary scaffolding wherein He, the Wisdom of God, builds His house.

**Symbolic Actions.**—Our Lord not only uttered symbolic words, but also did symbolic actions. In so doing He was acting as a Prophet. The prophets of the Old

Testament by God's command sometimes performed dramatic actions in order to declare some particular message to the people. Three instances may here be mentioned. Ahijah the Shilonite tore up a new garment in the presence of Jeroboam to show the approaching division of the kingdom (1 *Kings* xi. 29-32). Isaiah walked for three years without his upper garment and barefoot to foretell the captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia, two powers in which many Jews foolishly trusted (*Isa.* xx. 1-6). Jeremiah broke in pieces an earthen bottle at Topheth as a sign that God will break the nation in pieces (*Jer.* xix. 10).

Some of our Lord's signs are no less dramatic. Thus He cleansed the Temple, overturning the tables of the money-changers and driving out the merchants with a scourge of cords (*John* ii. 14). He cursed the barren fig-tree which had a fair show of leaves but no fruit, in order to warn His disciples against a spiritual deadness like that of Jerusalem with its outward piety and inward hardness (*Mark* xi. 13). His last entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was a symbolic act of high importance, emphasising His claim to be the Messiah (*Mark* xi. 8).

Of a somewhat different nature is the washing of His disciples' feet by our Lord, in order to teach them the duty of mutual humble service (*John* xiii. 12). We find too both in *Mark* viii. 22-26 and *John* ix. 6 our Lord touches the eyes of the blind men before healing them; and apparently to encourage the blind, who, as Orientals were familiar with that form of remedy, touched the eyes with saliva. A final instance of symbolic action is the case of our Lord's breathing upon His disciples when on the evening after His resurrection He gave them the gift of the Holy Ghost and the power of forgiving sins (*John* xx. 21 f.). To men who knew the Old Testament, this breathing would suggest God communicating life to nature both at the creation of the world and at other times. The breath of God meant a manifestation of His power.

That all the miracles of Jesus were signs is also true. But they were not signs in the sense of astonishing prodigies, such as His hearers sometimes desired. They were revelations of the moral power of God to save the souls and bodies of His children.



## CHAPTER II

### CHRIST AND THE JEWISH LAW

**Reverence for the Old Testament.**—Our Lord Jesus Christ brought His message to a people who already believed in God, and believed that God had already spoken to them by other messengers. Even the Samaritans, who rejected the later prophets, were sure that the voice of God had come to the ancient patriarchs such as Jacob, and to Moses, whose laws they revered. And our Lord took His stand upon the Old Testament. The whole volume of the canonical books of the Old Testament was not finally put together by the Jews into one collected volume until a short time after the destruction of Jerusalem at a council held at Jamnia soon after A.D. 70. But it is quite certain that most of the books were already regarded as forming a sacred 'canon' or list of inspired writings, and it is probable that the remaining books were already commonly regarded by thoughtful Jews as part of the same canon. Our Lord himself is shown in the Gospels to have studied the Old Testament deeply, and to have quoted it freely. The Gospels record twenty-one quotations made by our Lord from the Jewish prophets; and though He sets aside part of the teaching of Moses, He assumes that the authority of Moses had been valid. He took for granted the religious truths implied in the Old Testament with regard to God and creation, man and God's care for man, and God's purpose to help the world by means of His special gifts to the people of Israel. He treated the history of the Old Testament and the utterances of the Hebrew prophets as a preparation for His own coming into the world. He used it to explain His own mission and to illuminate His own death. He fed His own soul upon its holiest, strongest, and most tender verses. He knew that a special revelation had been given to the Jews, the Father of whom He spoke was the God whom the Jews

worshipped. It was a revelation so much fuller and clearer than any other nation possessed, that He said to the Samaritan woman: 'Ye [Samaritans] worship that which ye know not: we [Jews] worship that which we know: for salvation is from the Jews' (*John* iv. 22).

**The Old Testament and false tradition.**—Our Lord taught that the Old Testament contained 'the word of God' and 'the commandment of God' (*Mark* vii. 13, 8, 9). In the very passage where He speaks in this manner, He insists on the contrast between the word of God and the perversion of it by the Pharisees:

'Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given to God; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father or his mother; making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do' (*Mark* vii. 9-13).

This chapter in *Mark* is of very great importance for the clear and sharp distinction which it draws between the interpretation of the Old Testament given by our Lord and that given by the Pharisees and the Scribes of Jerusalem (vii. 1). And it deals with an important stage in our Lord's ministry. It is soon after the beginning of the middle period which opened about the time of Passover A.D. 28, when the zeal of the populace for Jesus reached its high tide and began to ebb away, and when St. Peter in the name of the disciples made his great confession of belief in Jesus as the Son of God. But Christ's attitude was always the same towards both the spirit and the letter of those Pharisaic additions to the rules of the Old Testament. It was the attitude of stern hostility towards a mere parade service which was performed without the heart drawing any nearer to God. The religious observances of His own disciples are to be essentially different. Their almsgiving, their prayers, and their fasting, must not be directed towards the eyes of human observers:

‘When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward’ (*Matt.* vi. 2).

It is neither difficult nor unprofitable to secure applause by an outlay of this kind. But its religious value is less than nothing.

**Pharisaism denounced.**—In *Matt.* xxiii. our Lord utters a tremendous closing denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. It opens with the somewhat startling statement, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe.’ It is plain from the verses which follow that our Lord cannot mean more than that they are to be obeyed when they are true to the Old Testament itself. He goes on to scourge the sins of the Scribes and Pharisees with words of fire. He repeats His old charge against them. The religion is a play ‘done to be seen of men.’ It is to be seen and admired for their orthodoxy that they make broad the phylacteries and the symbolical borders of their garments. It is to assert their personal authority that they love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the title of ‘rabbi.’ Their moral theology was trickery, allowing men to swear by the Temple and then break their oath with impunity, while asserting that to swear by the gold of the Temple was a really binding oath. They were indeed right to give to God tithes even of herbs such as mint and anise. But so pedantic was their regard for these trifles that they had forgotten ‘judgement, and mercy, and faith.’ Jesus himself conformed to many of the ritual requirements of the Mosaic Law. When the element of liberty in His teaching was noticed, some doubt was felt as to whether He would pay for the support of the Temple. But He instructed St. Peter to pay for them both the half-shekel which every Jew paid (*Matt.* xvii. 24). He also, when He healed a leper, said, ‘Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gifts that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them’ (*Matt.* viii. 4). These instances help us to understand how it might be right for the hearers of our Lord to obey even the Scribes and Pharisees. And yet, by their very desertion of the inward spirit of the noblest

parts of the teaching of Moses, they brought upon themselves Christ's condemnation. After He had taught that defilement was really inward and not outward we are told :

'Then came the disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit' (*Matt.* xv. 12-14).

Is the whole Law permanent?—The above passages show how deep a line of cleavage our Lord drew between 'the law of God' contained in the Old Testament and the Jewish *Halacha* or 'tradition of men.' Did He then sanction the whole of the teaching contained in the Old Testament and regard it as a law for all time? There are some verses which seem to answer that He did thus sanction it all. He said, 'Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (*Matt.* v. 19). No assertion could be more emphatic, and yet it seems at first sight to be inconsistent with several commandments which He himself issued, especially with regard to the laws of revenge and divorce. The contradiction, however, can be done away if one condition is fulfilled. If there exists some law within the law, so far-reaching as to penetrate everything that Moses and all the devout writers of the Old Testament directed to be done, and able to complete all that they left incomplete, the contradiction disappears. This law within the law is love. And Jesus reissued the law in a developed and perfect form because He showed us the character of perfect love:

'And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The

first is, Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God, the Lord is one : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (*Mark* xii. 28-31).

The Scribe who questioned Jesus seems to have assumed that some commandments in the law are insignificant and some significant, and if so, which is the most significant? Our Lord meets the questioner on his own ground. He seems to say, 'Yes, there is one commandment more important than all others ; not in the sense which you mean but in a deeper sense ; the essential duty is the duty of love, and the command to love is the greatest commandment.' And the Scribe understood, and declared that to love God and one's neighbour 'is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' By laying down these principles as the real basis of duty our Lord was able to say with truth :

'Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets ; I came not to destroy but to fulfil' (*Matt.* v. 17).

By 'fulfil' our Lord here means 'bring to full perfection' by His own teaching. We notice at once that while the ordinary Jewish theology of the time made the legal enactments of far greater importance than the prophets, our Lord brings the prophets into the same prominence as the law. The Scribes added new precepts to the law ; our Lord did not add but subtract. But to all that He retained He gave an intensified and more spiritual meaning. In their literal sense 'the law and the prophets were until John' (*Luke* xvi. 16), and were then superseded by the Gospel. But their moral teaching was not discarded but absorbed by the Gospel ; and this absorption was accompanied by an abrogation of ceremonial rules which makes the yoke of Jesus 'easy' and His burden 'light' to all who have learned His spirit (*Matt.* xi. 30).

A few illustrations will now be given in order to show how our Lord sometimes abrogated and sometimes sanctioned the Jewish law.

Some ceremonial laws abolished.—The law had prescribed in detail what kinds of food defiled the person

who ate them. Our Lord, on the other hand, said, 'There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him : but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man' (*Mark* vii. 15). This is not a mere criticism and condemnation of Pharisaic additions to the law. It is a great maxim which overthrew the whole of the ancient Hebrew conception of the ceremonial cleanness or uncleanness of food. Christ refuses to sanction a religious distinction between clean and unclean, except in the sphere of morality. It is not a sign of indifference towards the good of cleanliness, nor is it a repudiation of the moral usefulness of self-denial in matters of food. But it is the assertion that food as such, all of it created by the one good God, cannot be divided into pure and impure. St. Mark perceived the wide application of the maxim, as is shown by his comment, 'This he said, making all meats clean.' And then St. Mark records the words of Jesus, 'That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man.' Foul and cruel thoughts and acts, deceit, pride and foolishness, 'defile the man.' This is the principle for which St. Paul contended against his Jewish and half-Jewish opponents. He says to the Romans, 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost' (*Rom.* xiv. 17).

In order to avoid all risk of contamination, the Jews used an elaborate system of ablutions, both of the person and of vessels employed. The purification of vessels alone occupies thirty chapters of a book of the Jewish Mishna. In *John* ii. 6 we find a reference to six stone water-pots for the water of purification at the marriage at Cana in Galilee. If their hands were ceremonially clean the Jews washed them before eating, and washed them twice if they were known to be unclean. Some washed their hands between the courses of a meal. Such attention was paid to this exterior cleanliness that the need of inward purity was obscured. The Mohammedan religion, which is a mixture of corrupted Judaism and corrupted Christianity, shows us the danger of the Pharisaic views about cleanliness, for it teaches that a man's prayers are invalid if his ablutions have not been performed correctly. Our Lord's teaching on this



subject went to the root of the question of purity, and in so doing cut through the ceremonial law of the Pentateuch.

**The laws of the Sabbath corrected.**—For the orthodox Jew the Sabbath bristled with conscientious difficulties, and our Lord's treatment of the Sabbath was narrowly watched by His critics. Properly considered, the Sabbath as a weekly day of rest and worship was a blessing to man and beast. But the Pharisees had done much to make it into a troublesome burden. Jesus therefore came constantly into collision with the Jews on this question. One Sabbath day Jesus and His disciples were crossing some corn-fields. The disciples while walking plucked the ears of corn to eat. This was permitted by the law (*Deut.* xxiii. 25), no doubt as a humane concession to the wants of poor and hungry people. But according to one of the refinements of Pharisaic interpretation, to pluck the ears was equivalent to reaping, and to rub them in the hands was threshing. And this was forbidden on the Sabbath. In reply Jesus showed from an incident in the life of David that a law with regard to eating might be broken when it clashed with the need of supporting life. And then He laid down the principle that 'the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' (*Mark* ii. 27). This does not abrogate the Sabbath, but it repudiates all rules which make the Sabbath injurious to the real needs and true interests of man.

Another instance is to be found in *Mark* iii. 1-6. It is the question which was often raised, that of the right to heal on the Sabbath. Christ was in a synagogue where there was present a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees watched Him with the intention of finding Him guilty of some misdemeanour which would make it possible for them to bring about His death. He deliberately asked them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do harm?' The Pharisees could not deny that it might be lawful to do good, for they themselves held that a neighbour might be assisted, if his life was in danger. They held their peace. And our Lord pressed the point home to His hearers by asking, 'What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not

lay hold on it, and lift it out?' (*Matt.* xii. 11). A man was of much more value than a sheep. So He restored the man's withered hand. Very similar is the case of the healing of the man with the dropsy on a Sabbath day when Jesus was eating bread in the house of a leading Pharisee (*Luke* xiv. 1-6), and the pathetic story of the woman who had been 'bowed together' for eighteen years, and whom He healed on the Sabbath to the indignation of the ruler of the synagogue where the miracle was performed. In all this teaching and action the principle is that the Sabbath is a means and not an end, and the claims of humanity are greater than the claims of human tradition. More than this, He asserts His right as Son of Man, as representative and King of the human race, to be Lord of the Sabbath (*Mark* ii. 28; cf. *Matt.* xii. 5-8). He can use the Sabbath as He wills. So it is plain that though He did not pronounce on all Sabbath rules and customs, He felt free to abrogate not only Pharisaic rules with regard to the Sabbath, but also such a rule as that of the law itself which ordered a man to be put to death if he gathered sticks to make a fire on the Sabbath (*Num.* xv. 32-36).

**The Sabbath in St. John's Gospel.**—The first three Gospels therefore prepare us for the great passages in *St. John* which deal with the Sabbath day (*John* v. 1-17; ix. 1-41). They show that He both asserted the right for all to do beneficent deeds on the Sabbath, and claimed a personal authority to modify the law by developing its best latent meaning. The objection of the Jews is fundamentally the same in St. John's Gospel as in the others. When Christ opened the eyes of the blind man, they say, 'This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the sabbath' (*John* ix. 16). Our Lord had previously in Jerusalem healed a paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda. And our Lord defended His action in the simple words, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work' (*John* v. 17). He shows that the kind and beneficent action of God is continuous; it has lasted every Sabbath day since sabbaths first began. It has known no interruption, and the saving and beneficent work of the Son has been equally continuous and uninterrupted. He co-ordinated the character and duration of His work with that of His Father. He cannot act differently from

the Father. This sentence justifies His treatment of the Sabbath by an appeal to a higher ground even than that which is stated in the words, 'The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.' At the same time it explains it. It is His relation to the Father which explains His authority as the Son of Man. This we shall have to consider more thoroughly in ch. iv., when we study our Lord's teaching about himself.

**The Temple and its Sacrifices.**—Our Lord attended the great festivals at Jerusalem. In His boyhood He went there for this purpose (*Luke* ii. 42), and in His later life He attended several such feasts. In fact the story of St. John's Gospel hangs upon His visits to these feasts. He paid for the maintenance of the Temple worship the half-shekel, in Greek money two drachmas, required by the law (*Matt.* xvii. 27). He directed a leper whom He had healed to offer the usual sacrifice (*Matt.* viii. 4). He directed that a man, who when offering a gift at the altar remembered that he had wronged another man, should leave his gift to God unoffered and be reconciled to his brother (*Matt.* v. 23). He never opposed the offering of sacrifices: they were prophetic of His oblation of himself to God. At the same time He said nothing to imply that the offering of the Jewish sacrifices was a permanent duty. On the contrary, He foretold the destruction of the Temple, the ruin of which would necessarily entail the cessation of those sacrifices. While He lived on earth the Temple was to Him the place where God dwells (*Matt.* xxiii. 21). The Temple was for Him the 'house of prayer for all the nations,' and therefore He overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves for sacrifices, men who had turned the Temple into 'a den of robbers,' and He did this both at the beginning and at the close of His ministry (*John* ii. 14; *Mark* xi. 15). The Temple was a place where God welcomed prayer such as the prayer of the humble publican (*Luke* xviii. 14), and where the widow's mite was more valued by God than the easy gifts of the wealthy (*Mark* xii. 44). He resented the profanation of the Temple because it was a place for communion with God. And when He repeated the words of the prophet, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' He did not mean that sacrifice was wrong, but that merely symbolical and

external sacrifices were as nothing compared with a heart which is in touch with God.

**Fasting.**—The Old Testament prescribed only one fast, that of the Day of Atonement (*Lev. xvi. 29*). To this the Jews had added two weekly fast days, Monday and Thursday (*Luke xviii. 12*). It is very improbable that our Lord and His disciples omitted to fast on the Day of Atonement. But He did not prescribe any distinctive fast days for His disciples, or observe the Pharisaic fasts. 'And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?' (*Mark ii. 18*). Our Lord's reply is in effect that while He the Bridegroom of the soul is with them they cannot fast, but when He is taken from them 'then will they fast in that day.' This seems to mean that they will fast in their sorrow at His death. The sayings which follow about the futility of putting a strong new piece of cloth on an old garment, and of putting strong new wine into old wine-skins, imply that the new spiritual life of Christendom cannot be confined in the forms of Judaism. It does not at all mean, as it is sometimes interpreted to mean, that no outward observances will be matters of duty for the Christian. For our Lord speaks of new wine being put into fresh wine-skins, showing that the potent new life must have new forms of its own. And to impress upon His disciples the truth that fasting must never be a matter of ostentation, but a welcome discipline, He says, 'Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face: that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee' (*Matt. vi. 17*).

**Conclusion.**—If we are to estimate how vast was the change which Jesus inaugurated by His relation to the Old Testament, we must follow the example of St. Paul and remind ourselves of the terrible words of the ancient code, words contained in a book which is full of humane regulations marking a great advance on the laws of a less developed age: 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law to do them' (*Deut. xxvii. 26*). Side by side with this we must place the words also quoted by St. Paul, 'Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my

judgements ; which if a man do, he shall live in them' (*Lev.* xviii. 5). And then we think of Jesus, reared in the midst of pious Jewish people, teaching openly that the law is relative, imperfect, requiring to be transformed. Or we think of Him saying to the woman of Samaria, 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth' (*John* iv. 21, 23). It was the change of the partial into the perfect, of the local into the universal, of the temporary into the everlasting.

## CHAPTER III

### GOD THE FATHER

**The Christian God and Paganism.**—Jesus Christ has shown God to men. And the religion of Christians cannot be divorced from their knowledge of God. If they are blind to the vision of God as shown to them by Jesus Christ, their life cannot be the same as it is when they carry that vision in their hearts. Now, it was a vital fact in the teaching of Jesus Christ that He taught men that their life and their duty depend upon an Almighty Spirit whom He calls 'The Father.' It was not a new thing to speak of God as *Father*. It is true that some great religions and philosophies show no real knowledge or intuition of this truth. There is some noble moral teaching in the early form of Buddhism, but Buddhism had nothing to teach men concerning God. It ignored Him, and the result has been that later Buddhism has tried to appease man's hunger for God either with teaching about God which contains some resemblance to Christianity, or, more frequently, with gross idolatry. Hinduism has no clear idea of a personal God, but thinks of the Supreme Being as a vague law of nature showing itself in every form of good and evil alike. The Greeks had sometimes spoken of Zeus, the god of the bright sky, as 'Father of men and gods.' But their stories concerning Zeus were of such a kind as to imply the widest difference between religion and morality. That difference was a chasm which the Greek philosophers were never able to bridge completely. The later Greek philosophy, though it taught some high principles of morality, was inclined to a vague, abstract, impersonal idea of God. The result was the same as in the case of Buddhism. The last great form of Greek philosophy, that called Neo-Platonism, had to fortify itself with gross superstition. Magic, spiritualism, amulets, baths in the blood of consecrated bulls, were used as means



for securing the help of unseen powers by men who could not persuade themselves that the Highest Being took a personal interest in their welfare.

**The Christian God and Judaism.**—On the other hand, the Hebrews for centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ had believed that there is only one God; and that He is a God of power, love, and pity, who can be called by the name of *Father*. And it was of this same God that Jesus spoke. But here, as in other parts of His teaching, it is as important to notice where He differed from the great Hebrew writers as where He repeated their words. We find in the Old Testament such sayings attributed to God as—‘Israel is my son, my first-born’ (*Exod.* iv. 22), and ‘When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt’ (*Hos.* xi. 1). The idea of God’s fatherhood here seems to denote love and favour. Sometimes it rather denotes creation and sovereignty. These ideas seem prominent in the text:

‘Do ye thus requite the Lord,  
O foolish people and unwise?  
Is not he thy father that hath bought thee?  
He hath made thee, and established thee.’

(*Deut.* xxxii. 6.)

In such passages God is regarded as the Father of the Hebrew nation, and not of individual men and women. It has been doubted whether there is a single passage in which it is implied that the relationship of a son is open to every individual man in his intercourse with God. But great tenderness is associated with the words ‘our Father’ in *Isaiah* lxiii. 16, and God is said to pity His people ‘like as a father pitieth his children’ (*Psalms* ciii. 13). And the later Jewish literature, issuing as it does from a time when religious individualism had grown stronger, speaks of God as the Father of the righteous man. In the Book of *Wisdom* the wicked are represented as mocking at the righteous man for vaunting that God is his Father (ii. 16). In *Ecclesiasticus* God is addressed as ‘O Lord, Father and Master of my life’ (xxiii. 1). There was therefore a tendency to give a more personal sense to the name ‘Father,’ and about the end of the first century of the Christian era we find that some eminent rabbis used the term ‘heavenly Father,’ which we find in the New Testament.

On the other hand, we must take into account two other tendencies in Judaism. (a) There is an element of *uncertainty* about God, tending almost to Agnosticism. It finds its expression in Job, confronted by the great riddle of the universe:

'Oh that I knew where I might find him,  
That I might come even to his seat! . . .  
Behold I go forward, but he is not there;  
And backward, but I cannot perceive him:  
On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot  
behold him:  
He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot  
see him' (*Job* xxiii. 3, 8, 9).

It finds vent in the lamentable cry in *Proverbs* xxx. 2-4:

'Surely I am more brutish than any man,  
And have not the understanding of a man:  
And I have not learned wisdom,  
Neither have I the knowledge of the Holy One.  
Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended?  
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?  
Who hath bound the waters in his garment?  
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?  
What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou  
knowest?'

A similar uncertainty is reflected in the too Greek and too abstract idea of God which we find in Philo, the great Jewish philosopher who lived at Alexandria in the time of Christ. (b) There is an element of *anxious fear* in the reverence of God which tends to superstition. Concerning this fear we must speak with respect. It contained the same profound truth as we find in the later Jewish conception of the seriousness of sin and the need of holiness in worship. It was probably a good thing that the Jews were inclined to drop the use of such proper names as Abi-el, Eli-ab, Abi-ya, in which the primitive Semitic idea of the Fatherhood of God was enshrined. The name of God was realised as something too sacred to be bandied to and fro in daily social intercourse. But a more sombre aspect of this reverence is to be seen in the insertion of myriads of imaginary angels, good or evil or mischievous, between God and the world, distracting the minds of men from the thought

of God. And the realisation that God is a King was not free from the Oriental associations of despotism and courtly magnificence. God was described by strange titles as Heaven, the Place, the Height, the Throne of God, and finally was thought to communicate with creation only through a 'secretary,' the chief of spirits, named the Metatron, an angel who sits in the innermost chamber before God, while the other angels only hear His commands from behind the veil. The word Metatron appears to be of Greek origin, signifying 'beside the throne.'

**The Memra or Word of God.**—There is in the Jewish Targums, or ancient paraphrases of Scriptures, a word which never occurs in the Talmud. It is 'Memra.' It is a remarkable fact that God as revealing himself and coming into connection with the world, is called the 'Memra,' or Word. The Memra is distinct from the angelic Metatron. It is God speaking, and is not identical with a word spoken by God, such as was called by the Jews *pithgama*. Of great interest is the Targum of Onkelos on *Deut.* xxxiii. 27, where instead of 'underneath are the everlasting arms,' we find 'and by his Memra was the world created,' exactly as in *John* i. 10. The doctrine of the Memra, unlike the Stoic idea of the divine Logos, rests on a basis more religious than philosophical. The Memra is more personal than the Logos of the pre-Christian Greeks. The idea of a God who is thus transcendent, distinct from the world, and yet consciously coming near to His creatures, prepared for the truth that 'the Word was made flesh,' as St. John has taught us.

**Devotion of Jesus to the Father.**—The name 'Father' is in the New Testament a counterpart of the name Jehovah (Yahwe) in the Old Testament. It is the fullest revelation of God that is or can be conveyed in one name. But this revelation is conveyed to us less in a name than in a life. The life of Jesus is a life of human devotion to the Father, so perfect that it has no parallel. This prompt, humble, persevering devotion on the part of our Lord is no unreality, no mere figure of speech. It is the crown and excellence of His human character. In early times the Church had to struggle against the semi-Christian teaching of sects such as Docetists, Gnostics, and

Apollinarians, who from a mistaken reverence deformed our Lord's humanity, by denying either the reality of His body or the reality of His soul. They thought that if Christ was divine He could not have been truly man. Teaching of this kind hedged round whole regions of our Lord's life as not really imitable on the part of His followers. But the Gospels glow with a great truth which must be grasped as an experience by all Christ's followers to the best of their power. It is the experience of intercourse with, communion with, the Father. This is our Lord's own habit of mind, and it is manifested by Him in a way which shows His desire that it should be the habit of mind found in His disciples.

This devotion to the Father is quite as much emphasised by St. John as by the other evangelists. The very fact that St. John says even more than the Synoptists to exalt his readers' conception of Jesus, seems to stimulate his desire to record those sayings of the Master which show Him living in the shadow of the Father's glory. St. Luke gives us the one authentic story of His boyhood, in which He says to His 'parents' who have found Him disputing in the Temple with the Jewish teachers :

'How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?' (*Luke ii. 49*).

When He begins to teach, He calls His hearers to be like 'your heavenly Father' (*Matt. v. 48*). The Father is in the background of one parable after another. It is not those who call Christ 'Lord, Lord' with hypocritical lips who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but 'he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven' (*Matt. vii. 21*). He gives thanks to the Father for revealing to 'babes' the truths which the wise and prudent were too sophisticated to perceive (*Matt. xi. 25*). He thanks the Father before partaking of food (*Luke xxii. 17 ff.*). But His true meat is to do the will of the Father (*John iv. 34*). 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me' (*John v. 30*). He again explicitly declares :

'I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me' (*John vi. 38*). He declares that He received from 'my Father' the commandment to lay down His life and take it again (*John x. 18*). His Father's house is the place of many

mansions where He will receive His faithful disciples. He prays for power to glorify the Father. When He in agony foresaw His death, He prayed with the Aramaic word that He learnt in childhood, 'Abba, Father' (*Mark* xiv. 36). The uttermost limit of His sufferings on the Cross was to be forsaken by Him to whom He had devoted all His life; and unless we understand something of that devotion, we can understand nothing of the pain of that desolation (*Mark* xv. 34). And at the last moment of His awful dying, He who had prayed to the 'Father' to forgive His murderers, prayed for Himself in the words:

'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'  
(*Luke* xxiii. 46).

Bearing in mind this devotion to the Father, we shall see that nothing in the life of Jesus is done at random, and that He bases none of His actions on a mere pre-concerted plan of human prudence. To the casual observer His life might appear to be wayward and His method capricious. He avoided success where it might have seemed certain. He occasionally reinforced a hard saying by one which is still harder. His teaching about His own Person did not make doubt an absolute impossibility, and He gave this teaching consciously. He chose to die amid circumstances which spoke simply of failure and disgrace. But it was increasingly evident to the few who were faithful to Him that there was a clue to the mystery. Whether He hid himself, or showed himself, whether He prayed on the hills or taught in the city, whether He lived or died, He was following the Father's will.

Jesus shows **men the Father**.—We have noticed that uninterrupted communion with the Father in which Jesus lived, the communion of a sinless human soul with the Creator. But the Christian's confidence in 'Our Father' rests upon something still deeper. Jesus taught that He was 'the Son' in a supreme and unique sense. He did not come to men as a son of God such as He invited us to become, but as 'the Son'; not as a revealer of God like Moses, but as the Revealer. In chapter iv. we shall endeavour to consider this more closely. At present we must be content to notice that He speaks of His own self as the revelation of God's

Fatherhood (*Matt.* xi. 27), and it is through Him only that men enter into the relation of sonship. His human devotion to the Father is steeped in something deeper and diviner. It depends upon and is worthy of a relation with the Father which is eternal, existing before the world began. When St. Philip said to Him, 'Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,' He replied, 'Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?' (*John* xiv. 8, 9). In the humanity of our Lord, and manifesting itself through that humanity, there is God. Jesus is not the Father, but His earthly life is the utterance in history of all the everlasting love and goodness of the Father. The Father is best known to us as Father when He is most evidently love. So He becomes Father to us in Christ. It is in Jesus that we recognise both the inward mind of God towards us and His outward actions. The truth that God is love became a fact to mankind when in Jesus Christ God made himself one with us and ourselves one with Him. This sympathy by which God in Christ endured with us all the trials and conditions of human life show us the Father. This is not merely the imagination of St. John. It is implied in all that union of authority and humility which we see in the sinless pitying Saviour described by the earlier evangelists. It was His mission to make men understand the very heart of God, the pulse of which is always beating in His own Person. He did not use intellectual arguments to demonstrate God's Fatherhood. For neither to the ignorant nor to the learned can God's Fatherhood be taught by argument. He therefore did not prove that God is Father, but simply showed the Father to us.

**Teaching of Jesus about the Father.**—Having noticed that in our Lord's life and His attitude towards mankind we find shown to us new depths in the nature of God's love, we must next notice that His actual teaching enlarged the meaning of Fatherhood. His teaching enforces the truths taught by the great Hebrew prophets that God is One, almighty, absolutely good, omniscient, beneficent (*Mark* xii. 29; x. 27; x. 18; *Luke* xvi. 15; xii. 24). But the central illuminating doctrine about God



in His parables and commandments is that He is 'Our Father.' In the Old Testament this truth appears occasionally like a star that is often hidden by fogs and mists; in the Gospels it is like a strong genial sun. We can estimate the greatness of the difference by the fact that in the Psalms, deep and personal as their language often is, God is never once addressed directly as 'Father,' whereas in the Gospel of St. Matthew alone our Lord speaks of God as 'Father' more than forty times. St. Matthew twenty times puts the expression 'heavenly Father' on the lips of our Lord, St. Luke does not use this expression at all, and St. Mark only mentions it once. We can only conclude that our Lord sometimes used the word 'heavenly' and sometimes not. It would be most readily appreciated and retained by Jewish disciples, among a circle of whom St. Matthew's Gospel was probably written. Except for this term 'heavenly,' no actual definition of God's Fatherhood in relation to mankind is given. But the dispositions which it emphasises are made quite clear. Thus our Lord says:

'Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (*Matt. v. 16*).

'Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you: that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (*Matt. v. 44 ff.*).

This Father, though He is a Person who loves and provides for all creation, is only the Father of other persons, capable of conscious fellowship with himself: 'Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your (not their) heavenly Father feedeth them' (*Matt. vi. 26*).

The disciple is to speak to God in perfect secret intimacy, 'and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee' (*Matt. vi. 6*). He is to be sure that God

will give him what is good for him: 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' (*Matt.* vii. 11). He is not to be anxious as to what he shall eat or drink, 'for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things' (*Matt.* vi. 32). And all this tender and attentive care of God obliges us all the more strictly to fulfil His will. Only he who does it can enter into the kingdom of heaven (*Matt.* vii. 21), and to do it is to share the inner experience of Jesus himself:

'For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother'

(*Mark* iii. 35).

And so in the words which He spoke to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, He bids her 'Go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God' (*John* xx. 17).

In the parable of the Prodigal Son (*Luke* xv. 11-32), which is really a parable of two sons, one guilty and the other beyond reproach, the fatherly love of God to men is enforced with a pathos that is too unique for description to be possible. The circumstances (vv. 1, 2) show that the parable is our Lord's defence of His own action, He is treating men as God treats them. The love of the father, the father who had never renounced his son, and had watched for his coming, is a love illustrated by almost every single word employed in the parable. And such is the love revealed in Jesus. And the complaint of the prodigal's elder brother, a complaint which has perhaps found an echo in many Christian lives, is met by the same affection; 'Child (*not son*), thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.' This is a new revelation of fatherhood to the son who had 'served' his father scrupulously, but had never quite understood that his father was asking for his heart.

**The Fear of God.**—We must not suppose that the tenderness of God towards His children makes it unnecessary for us to fear God. It is indeed true that St. John tells us that 'perfect love casteth out fear'; as love grows towards perfection everything like a slavish fear will depart, and in heaven the blessed will lose even their fear of losing God's love. But the fear of reverent awe will

remain for ever in the saints, and the fear of sinning will remain in the Christian so long as sin is possible to him. In prayer our Lord himself addressed the Father as 'Holy Father' and 'Righteous Father' (*John* xvii. 11, 25). And in the prayer which He taught us, immediately after we call God 'Our Father,' we are taught to say 'hallowed be thy name.' This is a prayer that God's character as revealed to men may be acknowledged by them to be holy. The name of God must be understood to cover and include all holiness, and nothing must be called holy which is in disagreement with the character of God revealed in Christ. In the most explicit way our Lord teaches that the Father punishes. The man who does not from his heart forgive his brother will receive from the heavenly Father a punishment compared with the punishment inflicted by 'tormentors' at the command of a generous master where generosity has been abused by a wicked debtor (*Matt.* xviii. 34). God has power over the soul of man. He can call to account suddenly the man who has made up his mind to eat, drink and be merry (*Luke* xii. 20). And since our destiny is in God's hand, we must regard Him with a fear which is due to God only :

'Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (*Matt.* x. 28).

**Is God the Father of all men ?**—The question has often been asked whether our Lord teaches that God is the Father of all men, or only the Father of those who believe in Jesus Christ. And sometimes a further question is asked, Did our Lord teach that all men, good or bad, are children of God ? To these questions the Gospels compel us to answer that God is the Father of all men, but that men themselves can either bring this relationship to an end or they can so strengthen and deepen it that His Fatherhood becomes to them a new thing. God is the Father of all men in the sense that He created them, and regards them with love and compassion, and knows that they are capable of fellowship with himself. But He is a Father in another sense, differing greatly in degree, to those who are in moral union with Christ, and those who, since Christian Baptism has been instituted,

have entered into the blessings and obligations which baptism implies. This distinction between God's Fatherhood as it is shared by all men and that Fatherhood which is only shared by faithful Christians, is not unreal or complicated. It is easily understood when we remember that the relation between man and God must be spiritual if it is to be complete. So long as love exists on one side only, its action is limited; when it meets with a response and a mutual love and communion begin, the limitation is removed. Conscious moral Fatherhood to be complete requires conscious moral sonship.

The welcome given by the Father to the prodigal son, and the joy which Christ says is felt in heaven 'over one sinner that repenteth' (*Luke* xv. 7, 10), implies that the attitude of God is one of fatherly compassionate love towards those who have wandered from the right way. And it was to the 'multitudes' as well as to His disciples that our Lord said, 'Call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven' (*Matt.* xxiii. 9). The term 'Father' expresses, not God's relation to some men, but something essential in His being and universal in application. When St. John says 'God is love' (*1 John* iv. 8), he is condensing Christ's own teaching about God's Fatherhood.

It is no real contradiction of this to say that our Lord shows that some men do not appropriate this Fatherhood of God. He never says 'your Father' except when He is addressing His actual disciples. And in *Matt.* v. 44, 45 the Greek word shows that it is necessary to imitate God's character if we are to *become* His sons:

'Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may become sons of your Father which is in heaven.'

Once more St. John exactly reflects the teaching of Jesus when he says: 'As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name' (*John* i. 12). To refuse the life of love and to reject Jesus, is to forfeit the right to be God's child. To the Jews who were physically the children of Abraham, but were not his true children because of their hardened unbelief, our Lord says: 'If God were your Father, ye would love me' (*John* viii. 42). The passage means: You are not true sons of God, as

you claim to be, just as you are not true sons of Abraham ; you have no love like God's, and you have no faith and do no works such as those of Abraham.

There is therefore a profound difference between the sense in which God may be called the Father of all men, and the sense in which He is the Father of those who through Christ have become sons of God, and whose life is controlled and blessed by their consciousness of His perfect love.

## CHAPTER IV

### OUR LORD'S TEACHING ABOUT HIMSELF

'Who say ye that I am?' Such was the solemn question addressed by our Lord to St. Peter at a great turning-point in His life and ministry. A right belief in himself is the foundation of the Christian life, and to be a Christian it is necessary to accept the central fact in the mind of Jesus Christ, the truth that He was the Son of God.

**Indirect Teaching about himself.** — We should first notice that a great deal of our Lord's teaching about His Person and His authority is conveyed indirectly. The actual titles which He applies to himself and those which He accepts when they are applied to Him by others, do not give us the whole clue to the mystery of His being. His commandments, His actions, and even His prayers, have to be studied if we are to know who He was and whence He came. There was great reserve in His teaching about himself; He only revealed himself gradually, and yet He does not leave us in any uncertainty about himself. If we have understood the startling difference between the righteousness that He requires and all other forms of righteousness, and understood how much deeper His doctrine concerning God is than that taught by others, we are already prepared for something further. We are ready to believe that He who taught in this unique manner had a unique personality. And from the first He made a claim upon His hearers which one who was only a good man or a great prophet could not dare to make. In the Sermon on the Mount He assumed that He would judge all men :

'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (*Matt. vii. 22, 23*).

Corresponding with this claim to judge the world there



is His unqualified claim to set aside the ancient law—  
 'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . .  
 but I say unto you' (*Matt.* v. 33, 34). There is also His  
 claim upon man's present allegiance—'If any man  
 cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and  
 mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and  
 sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my  
 disciple' (*Luke* xiv. 26). Side by side with this stern  
 saying we may set these words of divine consolation:

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy  
 laden, and I will give you rest. Take my  
 yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am  
 meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find  
 rest unto your souls' (*Matt.* xi. 28-30).

And His power both to judge and to console is to be  
 seen in the forgiveness which He personally gives to  
 those who need it. The Pharisees were offended because  
 He forgave the sins of a man who was paralysed. And  
 He went beyond all that we can conceive the holiest  
 human prophet saying when He said of the sinful woman  
 who wept over His feet, 'Her sins, which are many, are  
 forgiven; for she loved much' (*Luke* vii. 47).

**Our Lord as Prophet.**—In the message of the Gospel  
 there flows the stream of ancient Jewish prophecy with  
 its stern moral requirements and message of sympathy  
 for all mankind. The stream which even in the prophets  
 was sometimes interrupted, is clear and unbroken in the  
 message of Christ. And His message, like that of the  
 old Hebrew prophets, contains predictions of God's  
 action in the future.

The people recognised Jesus as a prophet. The  
 general judgment on Him at the beginning of His  
 ministry was that 'a great prophet is arisen,' and that  
 'God hath visited his people' (*Luke* vii. 16). So at the  
 close of His ministry the people declared, 'This is the  
 prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth' (*Matt.* xxi. 11). And that  
 our Lord did in some sense claim the office of a Prophet  
 is shown by various passages. In the synagogue at  
 Nazareth He quotes and applies to himself the prophet's  
 words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because  
 he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor'  
 (*Isa.* lxi. 1; *Luke* iv. 18). When His hearers were  
 offended at the difference which they noted between Him

and His humble family, He said, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house' (*Matt.* xiii. 58). And when His death was imminent, He placed himself in the line of the prophets of Israel, foretelling that, like them, He could perish in no other place than Jerusalem (*Luke* xiii. 33). To His own disciples and also to the multitude He appeared both as Teacher or Rabbi, teaching deep moral and religious truth, and as Prophet, announcing God's judgments and rewards. And He permitted himself to be addressed by these titles. But He is Prophet in such a supreme and final sense that He distinguishes himself from other prophets in degree and kind. He says 'the law and the prophets were until John' (*Luke* xvi. 16). And He, who expresses the Father perfectly, is above those 'unto whom the word of God came' (*John* x. 35).

**Jesus as the Son of Man.**—Our Lord's favourite title for himself was 'the Son of Man.' It occurs 14 times in St. Mark, 31 times in St. Matthew, 25 times in St. Luke, and 12 times in St. John. It cannot be disputed that the title was really used by our Lord himself. It is found in all the most primitive parts of the Gospels, including the Discourses embedded in St. Matthew's Gospel, and the special material used only by St. Luke. It is only found once in Acts (vii. 56), and twice in Revelation. It never occurs in St. Paul, and is quite rare in early Christian books later than his time. The fact seems to be that it was only very imperfectly understood by Gentile Christians. Some modern critics have held that even in the Gospels its presence is due to a misunderstanding, the early Christians having translated it into Greek from the Aramaic *barnasha*, which only meant *mankind*, though its original literal meaning was 'son of man.' These writers hold that our Lord did not mean himself when He used the phrase, or that He did not use it at all. Against this it can be successfully maintained that the phrase is derived from the Hebrew rather than from the Aramaic, and that the evidence for its use by our Lord as a title for himself is overwhelming.

**The Son of Man in Jewish literature.**—In Ezekiel we find an early use of the phrase, which here signifies man as weak and creaturely.

A more important use of the phrase is found in Psalm viii. 4:

'What is man that thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?  
For thou hast made him but little lower than the  
angels,

And crownest him with glory and honour.'

In these words of the Psalmist the idea of man's humble dependence upon God is combined with the idea of the high dignity which God has bestowed upon him. A great destiny belongs to him in spite of his littleness. A third and still more important passage is the vision in Daniel vii. Here the prophet shows us the four great empires of the ancient world, each represented as a beast of prey, brought before God's throne and deposed. Then a fifth figure comes before God, 'like unto a son of man,' i.e. like a man. This Figure is a personification of the 'saints of the Most High,' i.e. a regenerate Israel. He receives a kingdom which is eternal and does not pass away like the empires of this world.

The next writing in which such a personification is found is the Book of Enoch, a Jewish apocryphal book, of which the part called the *Similitudes* was probably written between B.C. 94 and B.C. 64. Here the judgment scene of Daniel vii. is unfolded, and the Son of Man who is seated by God on His own throne is the Messiah who is appointed by God to judge the world.

The Son of Man therefore means *The Man* of supernatural authority, the Messiah who will judge, the Messiah who will represent and, as it were, include His people. Though He is human, He is more than human. The title was not a common title for the Messiah at the time of our Lord's ministry. But it existed and was understood by some of His hearers. And our Lord used it to veil and suggest the doctrine of His Person, just as He used the phrase 'kingdom of God.' The phrase was old, but in wrapping it round His own Person He filled it with new and nobler contents. In using it our Lord added to it both a conception of higher dignity and power, and a conception of deeper humiliation. With this element of humiliation we must connect those features of the Son of Man which recall the suffering Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah, where this Servant performs the super-

natural work of atoning for human sin. A few passages will illustrate the claims which this title involves :

1. It is used to teach that Jesus is himself the Judge of all men, as—‘When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory’ (*Matt.* xxv. 31). ‘The Father gave him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of man’ (*John* v. 27).

2. It is used in such a manner as to suggest that Jesus represents mankind, and is in living relation to them, as when ‘the Son of man shall come in his glory’ and shall say to those who have shown mercy to the hungry, the stranger, and the naked, ‘Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me’ (*Matt.* xxv. 31, 40). This use of the phrase may be compared with the collective meaning which it has in *Daniel* vii.

3. It is associated by our Lord with His sufferings and death. For instance—‘He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again’ (*Mark* viii. 31). It should be noticed that the disciples did not easily understand that He would die, or see that the ‘Son of man’ was here a title equivalent to the suffering ‘Servant of Jehovah’ in *Isaiah*. *St. John’s Gospel* agrees with this. When our Lord said, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself,’ the multitude answered, ‘We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever : and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?’ (*John* xii. 34). This last verse is particularly important as proving that the title did not clearly suggest Messiahship to the people. To the group of verses which suggest the Servant of Jehovah we must undoubtedly add the verse, ‘The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many’ (*Mark* x. 45).

4. The remaining passages fall more or less under the above divisions. Some assert His rights and dignity, as ‘The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins’ (*Mark* ii. 10), and ‘The Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath’ (*Mark* ii. 28). Others draw attention to His lowliness and seem to command our reverent compassion,

as, 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (*Luke ix. 58*), and 'goeth [to death] even as it is written of him' (*Mark xiv. 21*). When we take these different expressions together, we see that though they imply the truly human nature of our Lord, they suggest that He was far more than human. They show a relation between Him and mankind which cannot be justified if He is not divine.

**Jesus as the Son of God.**—Our Lord taught that He was the Son of God. This phrase, like the phrase Son of Man, is to be found in the Old Testament. It is applied to the angels, also to the Hebrew nation, and to the Israelite king. The prophet Nathan announcing God's promise concerning this king says, 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son' (*2 Sam. vii. 14*). We may compare with this verse another :

'The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son ;

This day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,

And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession' (*Psalms ii. 7, 8*).

This psalm speaks of something higher and wider than a human monarchy. The Jews undoubtedly interpreted it to mean the Messiah and his reign, but when hard pressed by Christian controversy they applied it to David. Thus the title 'Son of God,' as used by the Jews, implied special endowments and privileges conferred by God, and was given by them to the divinely anointed King whom they expected to come and reign over them. In the later Jewish apocryphal books it means the Messiah (*2 Esdras vii. 28, 29*).

The title, when first applied to our Lord by others, probably had only this official sense of Messiah. Thus the demoniacs address Him as the 'Son of God' or 'the Son of the Most High God' (*Mark iii. 11 ; v. 7*). Satan also challenges Him to prove that He is the Son of God by turning stones into bread (*Matt. iv. 3*). Jesus is addressed as having supernatural powers, such as ordinary Jewish belief attributed to the Messiah.

The way in which the term is used in the Gospels by those who are not His disciples, suggests some further shades of meaning. At His trial the Jewish high priest

bade Him say whether He was or was not, 'the Christ, the Son of the Blessed' (*Mark* xiv. 61, 62). Here, and still more in the parallel verse in *St. Luke* (xxii. 70), the title Son of God seems to imply something deeper than the current use of the word Messiah, and to approach the fuller meaning suggested in such Old Testament passages as *Isa.* vii. 14; ix. 6; *Micah* v. 2; *Mal.* iii. 1, where the representative of God brings God's presence in His own person. The murderers who told Him to come down from the cross, if He was really 'the Son of God,' and the Roman centurion who said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (*Mark* xv. 39), would have used the phrase in different senses, according as they were either heathens or, on the other hand, Jews and proselytes. On their lips the words would mean a demigod or the Messiah.

The name 'Son of God' as used by the disciples.—Perhaps the most important passage of this kind is *St. Peter's* confession at *Cæsarea Philippi*. Jesus asked His disciples, 'Who do men say that I the Son of Man am?' and they quoted various opinions which show that in the public opinion of Galilee He was at least a supernatural personage. These opinions our Lord regards as inadequate, and He asks, 'But who say ye that I am?' Simon Peter then replied, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (*Matt.* xvi. 16). This is a definite confession that Jesus is the Messiah expected by the Jews, but it is more than this. If *St. Peter* had only intended to confess that He was the Messiah, he would have been drawing an obvious inference from what he already knew. But because it is not an obvious inference but a great act of inspired faith, our Lord blesses the speaker, adding 'for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Another passage which is less clear than *St. Peter's* confession is the confession of *Nathanael* when he was called by Jesus early in His ministry. *Nathanael* exclaimed, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel' (*John* i. 49). It is probable that this early confession does not imply more than a strong acknowledgment of His Messiahship. Otherwise the words 'Thou art King of Israel' would seriously detract from the force of the title. As it is, they simply explain it.



What the title meant to our Lord.—At His Baptism, and again at His Transfiguration, our Lord heard the Father say the words,

‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (*Matt.* iii. 17; xvii. 5).

At these two great events our Lord was fully conscious of His entirely exceptional relationship to the Father. He did not first become conscious of this fact at His Baptism. He knew it clearly when at the age of twelve He was found by His mother in His ‘Father’s’ house (*Luke* ii. 49). This sonship is implied in the accounts of His miraculous birth in St. Matthew and St. Luke and in His direct assertions in St. John. No book of the New Testament teaches that Jesus became the Son of God at His Baptism or at any period in His ministry. The consciousness that God was His Father in a special sense lies at the root of His life. But He is only once in the Synoptic Gospels directly said to have used the title. And then it was the Jews round His cross who said,

‘He trusteth on God: let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God’ (*Matt.* xxvii. 43).

Even in St. John it is not often hinted that our Lord directly used the title. But all this reticence is exactly in accordance with our Lord’s whole method in advancing His claims. He did not force men to believe; He left it possible for them to doubt. He meant their intellectual belief to advance with, and not independently of, their moral growth. It is quite clear that all the time He was assuming and suggesting this relationship of nature to God. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins He is the Bridegroom, whom to follow is to reach heaven (*Matt.* xxv. 6). He is the King’s Son for whom the marriage feast is prepared (*Matt.* xxii. 2). In the parable of the wicked husbandmen (*Mark* xii. 1-12) He is the Son and Heir of God, absolutely distinct from the Jewish prophets though their Successor. And when the Scribes discussed with Him why David called the Messiah ‘Lord,’ His handling of the question proves that He knew that while as the descendant of David He was to that extent subordinate to David, He was also the Lord of David because He was the divine Messiah.

Further, our Lord, though He teaches that all men may become the children of God, always makes a distinction between His own sonship and that of His disciples. He constantly calls God 'My Father' (*Matt.* vii. 21; x. 32; xi. 27; xv. 13, etc.), and speaks to His disciples about 'Your Father.' But He never calls God 'Our Father' except in the prayer which He taught to His disciples in direct answer to their own request. The unique character of His sonship is emphasised with still greater force in the passages where He speaks of himself simply as 'the Son.' Thus St. Mark records a saying in which our Lord places 'the Son' apart in the matter of His knowledge. Speaking of the day of judgment our Lord says,

'But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father' (*Mark* xiii. 32).

But the most intimate relationship between our Lord and the Father which we find mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels is probably that implied in *Matt.* xi. 27-30, and xxviii. 19, 20. In the former Jesus says,

'All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

In the latter passage He says,

'Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

Here our Lord not only inserts His own name between that of the Father and the Holy Spirit, but also promises that like the Father He will be with His disciples always. He is, in fact, omnipresent. And in saying this He is repeating in another form what He had previ-

ously promised when He said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (*Matt.* xviii. 20).

It is most important to observe that though our Lord's declaration of His Divinity is most plain in St. John's Gospel, His most absolute claims upon man are not made in that Gospel but in those of St. Matthew and St. Luke. And the earlier Gospels imply the doctrine declared in St. John. If the statements of the former with regard to Christ's Person are true, the statements of the latter cannot be false.

**The Doctrine of Christ's Divinity in St. John.**—Throughout the Gospel according to St. John, there are two great rivers of teaching which flow from the same throne of God. In the first we find reflected our Lord's dependence upon the Father, in the second we find the unity of His Being with that of the Father. 'I can of myself do nothing'; 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me' (*John* v. 30); 'I am come in my Father's name' (*John* v. 43), are instances of this intimate dependence upon God. But the dependence is not the dependence of a creature upon his Creator, but of an almighty Son upon an almighty Father. Jesus plainly co-ordinates His work with that of the Father when He commands an impotent man to carry his bed on the Sabbath day, and says, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work' (*John* v. 17). While the Father works, the Son works, doing good on the Sabbath no less than other days. He teaches that there is a union not only of co-operation, but also of actual essence, in the passage where He says, 'I and the Father are one thing' (*John* x. 30).

A passage where our Lord's teaching about himself is sometimes misinterpreted is *John* x. 34 ff. It is sometimes supposed that our Lord in there calling himself 'Son of God,' puts himself on the same level as the inspired judges of Israel who are called 'gods' in *Ps.* lxxxii. 6, claiming merely to be the bearer of a divine message. This misinterpretation overlooks the conclusion of our Lord's argument, and thereby misses the whole meaning. The Jews accuse Him of blasphemy, that is, the sin of using profane words. Our Lord replies that His words are not, even according to their

own standard, blasphemous. He had called himself Son of God ; whereas those who were entrusted with a much lower office are in the Old Testament called 'gods.' Having showed that He had not sinned in word, He turns to the question of His deeds. He appeals to His beneficent and marvellous *works* as an actual proof that there is an essential unity between himself and the Father. His works are divine, therefore His Person is divine. The Jews perfectly understood His argument, and saw, what some modern writers have failed to see, that He had repeated His claim to a real Divinity, neither titular nor otiose.

Nothing that speaks concerning Jesus anything lower than the language of the Nicene Creed will satisfy the Christian who has grasped our Lord's teaching in St. John's Gospel. Christ teaches that He existed before He came into the world : 'I came out from the Father, and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father' (*John* xvi. 28). The same thing is implied in the prayer : 'Glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was' (*John* xvii. 5). Another saying of Jesus, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am' (*John* viii. 58), expresses the truth that He is an eternal being. The words 'Verily, verily,' show the solemnity of the announcement which is about to be made, and the words 'I am' (see *Exodus* iii. 14) signify an existence which is not subject to change. When St. Thomas, the last of the eleven apostles who believed, said 'My Lord, and my God' (*John* xx. 28), his adoring confession was accepted by Jesus. St. John's Gospel shows that our Lord claimed to be essentially divine, an eternal Person, a conclusion to which the Synoptic Gospels inevitably point us. Even if the fourth Gospel could be blotted out as a forgery, no other conclusion would satisfy a religion based on the first three Gospels. And if the fourth Gospel is genuine, as we have excellent reasons for believing, we cannot think that its picture of Christ is false. If Jesus was only human, then to represent Him as God would have been equally inconsistent with any true reverence for God and any loyal affection for a human friend. The writer was no half-pagan Greek, who felt able to pay divine honours to a

human saint or hero, but a man who served one God only, the 'jealous' God of Israel who would not allow His honour to be paid to others. And his Gospel is a perpetual witness to the historical fact that Jesus was not turned into a god by the enthusiasm of ignorant followers, but that He was God's expression of himself, God expressed in human nature and human life.

We may end this chapter by stating briefly what religious value these titles of our Lord have, and will continue to have, for mankind.

1. The title 'Son of Man' reminds us of His readiness to minister and to die for the good of men, and it reminds us of His return to judge the world. It tells us of a great love freely offered to us, and the responsibility that we incur by refusing it. It tells us of His suffering for our transgressions, and it tells us that He will judge us according to our deeds. But it also speaks of His 'infinite sense of brotherhood with toiling and suffering humanity,' the sympathy of Him who came 'to seek and to save that which was lost' (*Luke xix. 10*).

2. The title 'Christ,' though so Jewish in its origin, is not a name which the Gentile Christian can neglect. In its simplest meaning of 'the Anointed One' it tells us of that special indwelling of the Holy Spirit which inspired all the life of Jesus, and enabled Him to do and suffer more than any other member of our race. Besides this, the name 'Christ' tells us of the place of the Jews in God's plan of redemption. The Jews were, as St. Athanasius said, 'the school of the knowledge of God for the world.' This small people had a greatness that belonged to no great heathen empire. For through a series of unique difficulties, and amid conditions which were unfavourable to the rapid growth of civilisation, the Jews did by their creed, their worship, and their writings, proclaim the Christ to be.

3. The title 'Son of God,' when understood in the light of our Lord's claim upon our souls, is the most distinctive and most important truth of our religion. God, the eternal Son, has come to us as man, the man Christ Jesus. Under essentially human conditions and experiences we see in Jesus God made manifest. The everlasting and completely perfect expression of the Father lived as Man among men. In the midst of

human humiliation and human sorrow, chosen for our sake, we see God exercising His highest attribute of love. It is this proof of God's sympathy with us that not only draws men back to God, but gives us a new knowledge of what our life ought to be. We know nothing in the nature of God or the nature of man which renders it impossible for a divine Being to lead a human life and pass through true human experiences. And a study of the life and teaching of Jesus in a spirit of moral sympathy leads us to the necessity of seeing in Jesus the supreme act of God in humanity. We find in Him a true human activity, and yet in Him God comes to us, and through Him God is in us. If the human experiences and sufferings of our Lord veil His Deity, it is nevertheless within those very experiences that we find that Deity. They are the mightiest work that God has done on our behalf.



## CHAPTER V

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

**Importance of this doctrine.**—One of the most central thoughts in the teaching of our Lord is that of the kingdom of God. It dominates so much of His doctrine, and stands in such close connection with the doctrine of His Person, that we cannot understand the Gospels if we leave it on one side. In the prayer which Jesus taught, the words, 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' are placed near the beginning of the prayer as part of that which ought to be the Christian's first desire. Christ himself, according to St. Mark (i. 15), began the preaching of the Gospel by saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.' St. Matthew (iv. 23) also describes the opening of Christ's ministry in Galilee as 'preaching the gospel of the kingdom.' St. Luke (iv. 43) represents our Lord as saying, 'I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent.' St. John shows that our Lord regarded the kingdom of God as a state of blessing and perfection, for he records His saying to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (*John* iii. 5).

What is this kingdom? The title 'kingdom of God' is used by St. Mark and St. Luke. But St. Matthew uses it only in two passages (xii. 28; xxi. 31, 43), replacing it as a rule by the title 'kingdom of heaven.' It is possible that this means heavenly or divine kingdom, but it is more probable that it means exactly the same as 'kingdom of God,' for the Jews out of reverence for the name of 'God' sometimes replaced it by the word 'heaven.' In either case the idea is substantially the same. It means a kingdom, or more accurately a reign, which is the reign of God, its laws being the will of God.

**The kingdom of God in the Old Testament.**—The Jews were familiar with the idea; and indeed whoever could

speaking with power about the kingdom of God struck a note which roused the hope and enthusiasm of almost every Jewish soul.

The actual name 'kingdom of God' does not occur in the Old Testament, but the idea which it expresses penetrated the whole of Judaism. After the Covenant had been made between God and Israel at Sinai, the Israelites regarded themselves as peculiarly His people. Scruples were actually felt as to the propriety of having any earthly king (1 *Sam.* viii. 4-9), but the earthly king when chosen was looked upon as a representative and vice-gerent of God. A deep undying hope existed in the people's mind that the words of Nathan to David would be fulfilled, and that David would always be represented by a descendant whose throne would be established for ever, whom God would chastise if he committed iniquity, but who would be regarded by God as His son (2 *Sam.* vii. 13). The writings of the prophets overflow with this hope. It animated Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah. In *Daniel* vii. this hope, which had become both a creed and a poem, is presented in the form of a vision. Daniel represents the four empires hostile to Israel, that of Nebuchadnezzar, the Medes, Alexander the Great, and the Syrians, as successively losing their power before the appearance of God upon His throne of judgment. Then he adds—

'Behold, there came with the clouds of heaven, one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days [God], and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Daniel seems to teach that when God judges the world, the resurrection will take place and the saints will live for ever. The 'one like unto a son of man' is a symbol of the faithful remnant of Israelites, the saints who shall receive the kingdom (vii. 18). And as the other empires are literal earthly empires, it is at least possible that Daniel means that the kingdom of the saints is to be a kingdom here upon earth.

**The kingdom of God in Apocryphal Books.**—During the later period of Judaism, when the Jews were oppressed in turn by the Greeks, by Antiochus Epiphanes and by the Romans, many looked forward eagerly to the judgment of God and the coming of the Messiah. Numerous writings were composed to sustain this faith. Such were the Book of Enoch, written at different periods subsequent to B.C. 133, the Psalms of Solomon soon after B.C. 63, the Assumption of Moses written about the beginning of the Christian era, and the more familiar Wisdom of Solomon, written in the last century before that era. This literature is sometimes definitely apocalyptic. That is to say, it contains revelations or visions of the coming glorious time when God will show himself and enable the Jews to throw off the yoke of their oppressors. In these apocalyptic pictures the Messiah frequently appears. Thus the Psalms of Solomon (xvii. 3-5) says, 'We hope in God our Saviour, and the kingdom of our God is for ever and ever over the nations, by the judgment of God. Thou, Lord, hast chosen David king of Israel, and thou hast sworn to his race for ever and ever not to permit his kingdom to perish before Thee.' The dreams of these non-canonical apocalyptic books tend to assume a very nationalist and political character. They both systematise and secularise the ancient hope for the reign of God. We find clear traces of this political element in the New Testament even among the most devout Israelites. Zacharias thinks of deliverance from the yoke of the Gentiles as necessary for the true service of God (*Luke* i. 74), and it was with the greatest difficulty that the disciples rid themselves of the thought of an earthly political kingdom.

Nevertheless, holier and calmer thoughts were entertained. In the *Wisdom of Solomon* (x. 10) the name 'kingdom of God' occurs. It means the heaven shown to Jacob when he dreamed of the ladder on which angels ascended and descended. And in the same book it is said that the 'righteous live for ever, and in the Lord is their reward, and the care for them with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive the crown of royal dignity and the diadem of beauty from the Lord's hand' (v. 15, 16). And again it is said that 'the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.

. . . They shall judge nations, and have dominion over peoples; and the Lord shall reign over them for evermore' (iii. 1, 8). This kingdom begins already in the heart of the righteous:

'For even if we sin, we are thine, knowing thy dominion; but we shall not sin, knowing that we have been accounted thine: For to be acquainted with thee is perfect righteousness, and to know thy dominion is the root of immortality' (xv. 2, 3).

The texts just quoted are written in the true spirit of the Psalmist, who sees the Lord reign in all His providence and goodness:

'The Lord is good to all;  
And his tender mercies are over all his works.  
All thy works shall give thanks unto thee, O Lord,  
And thy saints shall bless thee.  
They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,  
And talk of thy power;  
To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,  
And the glory of the majesty of his kingdom.  
Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
And thy dominion endureth throughout all generations' (*Ps.* cxlv. 9 ff.).

The kingdom is spiritual.—'My kingdom is not of this world' (*John* xviii. 36). The kingdom of God which He has entrusted to the hands of His Son is not political. None of the political revenges and none of the national enjoyments which the Pharisees and the Zealots expected are promised by Jesus. He has been charged in modern times with not stimulating commerce or invention or the 'liberal arts.' And His contemporaries were dissatisfied because He refused to be made a king (*John* vi. 15). At the beginning of His ministry, and possibly at later times, He was tempted to take up the part of a nationalist Messiah. And He refused, although the refusal meant poverty and death. We are told how from an exceeding high mountain He saw 'all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them' (*Matt.* iv. 8). From the top of *Jebel-es-Sikh*, to the north of Nazareth, He probably saw with outward eyes a vast panorama stretching into the pagan world. On one side were the rich corn-lands of *Esdraelon*. Below His feet were the roads

from Egypt and Jerusalem with passing caravans of merchants. To the north lay the road between Decapolis and the coast. There He might see the gleam of marching Roman legions. And far away, there was the bright sea and the ships laden with foreign cargoes. Satan made His thoughts an avenue of cruel temptation: 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' And Jesus effaced the vision of worldly glory from His mind and chose the vision of sorrow. To the vision of His Father's will He was consistently obedient. Shortly before His death the Pharisees and the Herodians deliberately tried to discover whether He was endeavouring to secure an earthly Messianic throne. They asked Him, with every show of outward respect for His learning and courage, whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not (*Mark* xii. 13 ff.). The question was a test question, for the right to make money or levy tribute was a prerogative of the crown. Consequently, the Jewish false Messiah Bar-Cochba in A.D. 134 struck his own coin and forbade the circulation of Roman money. But Jesus simply replied, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' His vocation was not to deprive Cæsar of his tribute but to vindicate God's claim upon the human soul.

He also struck at all political conceptions of His kingdom when He told His disciples to 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod.' They were to follow the example of neither the rigorous Jewish separatists, who wished to see every detail of the law observed in a new Jerusalem miraculously created, nor the cultured prince who tinctured a life of diplomacy and vice with an interest in theology. In both there was a strong element of cunning. Herod was 'that fox' and the Pharisees were his equal. The empire which Christ came to found was not one which sought to gain or to dispose of earthly territories and thrones, and it excludes cunning. It knows no statecraft but truth and justice. It was part of the brilliant cunning of the opponents of Jesus that they persuaded Pilate to condemn Him to death on the ground that His kingdom was of this world and that He was politically dangerous. For their objection to Him was not that He claimed to be a political

Messiah, but a heavenly Messiah in closest union with Jehovah. To a Roman sceptic the claim of Jesus to be 'the Son of the Blessed One,' who would one day appear on the clouds of heaven, could be little more than a harmless fairy tale. But it meant very much indeed to Pilate that the leading Jews represented Jesus as threatening the public peace by usurping an outward political sovereignty. Whether he believed the Jews or not, he acted upon their suggestion and condemned our Lord to death.

**The kingdom opposed to the power of Satan.**—The kingdom or rule of God excludes and overthrows the work of Satan. In the teaching of Jesus evil spirits have not the exaggerated power which they bear in the childish and fantastic legends of later Judaism. But they are recognised as spirits, and as 'unclean' (*Matt.* xii. 43; *Luke* xi. 24). Jesus casts them out, and a distinction is drawn between the expelling of such spirits and the mere healing of diseases (*Matt.* x. 8; *Luke* xiii. 32). At the head of these spirits is Satan, the adversary, also called the Devil or calumniator. He is a 'prince' (*John* xiv. 30), with a *kingdom* (*Matt.* xii. 26), which is an organised rule opposed to the rule of God. He is in a special sense the Enemy (*Luke* x. 19), he sows tares in the field where Jesus sows good seed (*Matt.* xiii. 39), and he strove to 'sift' the apostles 'as wheat' (*Luke* xxii. 31). The Saviour who does not struggle against the power of Rome struggles against 'the power of darkness.' And when the seventy disciples returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name,' He said, 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven' (*Luke* x. 18). He appealed to His power of casting out devils as a proof that the kingdom of God had already come:

'If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you' (*Matt.* xii. 28). Now, it may be urged that in certain cases our Lord conformed His language to the language of the period, and did not pause to discuss whether certain strange mental diseases were or were not due to the evil spirits to which popular belief attributed such maladies. For instance, the last passage quoted above is adapted to the exact language used by the Pharisees just previously.



But it does not seem open to dispute that He did mean to teach that there is a force outside us, not ourselves, which tempts us to evil and strives to thwart the work of God. And the victory which He gained over that power at His first great temptation brought with it the possibility and the guarantee of all future victories.

\* The kingdom a gift of God to man.—The preaching and the appearance of the kingdom of God are new facts in history. They are not a revival of a forgotten righteousness, but a new favour from God. All wise men regard freedom as a blessing and a gift, but the Gospel reminds us that God's sovereignty over man brought by His Son is itself God's gift and the security for our freedom. The kingdom is said to 'come,' to 'be at hand,' to 'draw nigh.' It is 'prepared' by God and 'inherited' (*Matt.* xxv. 34). It is 'given' by God to the Gentiles after having been misused by the Jews (*Matt.* xxi. 43); and in a passage where He encourages confidence in God, Jesus says:

'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' (*Luke* xii. 32). As it is a gift bestowed, so it is 'received':

'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein' (*Mark* x. 15).

At the same time we must remember that every gift of God to man, every privilege granted, demands a moral effort on man's side. Faith is not faith if it is a passive acquiescence. God's kingdom comes through the doing by men of the will of God as it is done in heaven. It cannot be appropriated without effort and self-renunciation. To 'seek' implies trouble, and to 'sell' everything for the sake of the Kingdom implies self-denial:

'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant seeking goodly pearls; and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it' (*Matt.* xiii. 45 f.).

God's purpose for us is fulfilled by our own co-operation. And St. Paul understood the true place of human effort when he wrote, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure' (*Phil.* ii. 12, 13).

The kingdom both present and future.—The kingdom of God is both present and future. That is to say, it was present in the world when Jesus taught and worked, and it is not a rule which will be first inaugurated at His second coming. Its full realisation is in the future, but it came among men in the actual Person of our Lord. It is also important to notice that the future is divided into the near, the distant, and the more distant future. The first of these three future periods is that which immediately followed the Ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit; the second cannot be sharply divided from the first but begins after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the liberation of the Church from its national Jewish centre; the third begins at the last judgment.

If we bear in mind this complex nature of the kingdom we shall easily avoid falling into the perplexity which is often caused by the question 'Is the kingdom eschatological, or is it not?' The word 'eschatological' is applied to all those 'last things' which the Jews expected to happen at the end of the world; such as the coming of the Messiah, the defeat and judgment of His enemies, and the beginning of the reign of the saints. But the Jews themselves were not agreed as to the order of these events. Some believed that the reign of the Messiah would not begin until after the judgment; others believed that He would conquer His enemies and begin His reign some time before the judgment. It is the latter belief which is nearer to the teaching of our Lord. He transformed it just as He transformed every other Jewish belief which He brought into connection with His own mission. But He did not postpone either the kingdom or the rule of God (in the New Testament the same word βασιλεία means both) until the time of His second coming. The kingdom came into the world as a hope for the future, but wherever Jesus went the hope became an actual reality.

(a) The kingdom is present. The preaching of Jesus begins with the words, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand' (*Mark* i. 15). The old era is therefore finished and a new era begins. So too the passage already quoted above implies that Satan 'the strong man' is already being bound :

‘If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?’ (*Matt.* xii. 28 = *Luke* xi. 20).

Jesus exhorts His hearers to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness, which implies that both the kingdom and the righteousness are present and accessible (*Matt.* vi. 33). He also in speaking of John the Baptist, says,

‘Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force’ (*Matt.* xi. 11 f.).

Moreover, the parables of the Sower, the Tares, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven, all imply that the kingdom is a present reality. They are certainly intended to convey other truths, such as the need of receiving the word rightly, the danger caused by the ‘Enemy,’ the rapid growth of the kingdom, and the deeply penetrating influence which it exercises. The ‘word of the kingdom’ plants the kingdom on earth, and as soon as the word uttered by Jesus is received the kingdom exists in germ.

(b) The kingdom belongs to the near future. It is a ‘far-off divine event,’ but yet our Lord said, ‘Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power’ (*Mark* ix. 1). St. Matthew in the parallel passage says, ‘till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom’ (xvi. 28). Which-ever of the two verses most accurately represents our Lord’s own words, a contrast is implied between the kingdom as now seen in feebleness, and as it will be seen in its true vigour after the death and resurrection of Jesus. This coming of the kingdom in power is itself a coming of the Lord. St. John, who so often enables us to understand the earlier Gospels better, tells us how our Lord promised to come to His disciples in order that they might not be desolate or ‘orphaned’ by His ascension into heaven. ‘I come unto you. Yet a little while,

and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me' (*John* xiv. 19). They needed a lasting present communion with Him, and He promised to give it. He comes not only to impart life, but also to execute judgment. And it is probably of the judgment executed in the destruction of Jerusalem that He spoke when He said :

'Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come' (*Matt.* x. 23).

By this destruction the kingdom of God will be taken away from the Jews and given to 'a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (*Matt.* xxi. 43). The conversion of the Gentiles will therefore lead to the development of the kingdom of God. This development is like the growth of the 'blade' into the 'ear' and the 'full corn in the ear' (*Mark* iv. 28).

(c) The evolution is to end with a revolution. We must postpone until Chapter x. a fuller account of the final realisation of the kingdom. The kingdom of God will be consummated at Christ's second coming. It belongs both to the Father and to the Son, and to the servants of the Son to whom He will say :

'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (*Matt.* xxv. 34).

So when we pray, 'thy kingdom come,' we are praying not only for God's glory, but for a glory of which He condescends to make us heirs.

The disciples are not to be impatient for any coming of Christ. 'The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it' (*Luke* xvii. 22). 'God,' as St. Augustine says, 'is patient because He is eternal.' And the Christian must wait, watch, and work.

The kingdom is universal.—The kingdom, wherein all are free, is free to all. It was not to be a nationalist kingdom either for the Jews or for any other race. Our Lord in teaching thus simply annihilated the fiercely patriotic dreams of the ordinary Jewish apocalypses. This universal character of the kingdom seems at first sight to be contradicted by the severe words spoken by Jesus to test the faith of the Canaanitish woman, and the words which He spoke just previously to His

disciples, 'I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (*Matt.* xv. 24). It also seems to be contradicted by the express manner in which Jesus forbade the twelve apostles at the beginning of their ministry to go into any 'way of the Gentiles' (*Matt.* x. 5). But His principle is clear. The mission that He claimed for himself during His earthly ministry was limited; the mission that He claimed for His Gospel was unbounded. It was His deliberate wish to travel unknown at the time when the Canaanitish woman sought His help (*Mark* vii. 24). He did in exceptional cases help the Gentiles; but His method was to work upon a small circle of thoroughly Jewish disciples and through them send the Gospel to the world as soon as there was a full Gospel to preach.

When our Lord had died and risen again, the Gospel which tells men that the remission of their sins is offered to them by God was ready to be preached. Then, and not till then, did our Lord give His apostles a world-wide commission:

'Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost' (*Matt.* xxviii. 19).

But He had before this prepared them for this work among the Gentiles. He had told His disciples that they were 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world,' not merely the salt and the light of Judaism (*Matt.* v. 13 f.). The truth that the Gospel was to be carried to the Gentiles is woven into the fabric of His parables, such as that of the Barren Fig-tree (*Luke* xiii. 6-9), the Great Supper (*Luke* xiv. 15-24), the Royal Wedding (*Matt.* xxii. 1-14), the Two Sons (*Matt.* xxi. 28-32). And early in our Lord's ministry when He healed the servant of the centurion at Capernaum, He rewarded the centurion's exquisite humility and robust confidence with a great prophecy:

'Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth

into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth' (*Matt.* viii. 11 f.).

**The kingdom both inward and outward.**—It is certain that the kingdom is presented to us as an inward power within the soul. Some scholars believe there is a clear proof of this in this passage:

'And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you' (*Luke* xvii. 20 f.).

Unfortunately the Greek words for 'within you' are ambiguous, and may mean 'in your midst.' This translation gives a good sense. The kingdom is already there, because Jesus is there, although the Pharisees do not recognise its coming. We can compare with this the rebuke addressed by our Lord to the multitudes in *Luke* xii. 54. They can interpret correctly the signs of the weather in earth and sky, they know when rain or heat are coming, but they cannot interpret the plain signs of the spiritual change which is being inaugurated. The first stage of the kingdom is not inaugurated by the portents, wars and catastrophes which the Pharisees expected, but by the life of Jesus and those whom He converts. The good scribe who was 'not far from the kingdom of God' (*Mark* xii. 34), and those on whom the beatitudes of Christ are pronounced, show us that the kingdom is in its essence inward and unseen. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (*Matt.* v. 3).

But the kingdom of God is also outward. All spiritual forces among men must have an outward form, and this form is a channel and instrument of the inward power. A treasure of gold may be hidden in an earthen vessel which merely keeps the treasure together and is no index to the nature of the treasure. But man's spiritual treasure is a life which cannot be kept unless it is able to expand. The kingdom of God beginning as the divine rule in the heart, must outwardly manifest itself in an organised society which passes through a history of its own. It is impossible not to recognise in the parable of the tares a reference to the future existence



of the Christian Church in the world. The tares are sown after the wheat and among the wheat. The kingdom is that part of the world's field where the good seed has been sown by the Son of Man, a part where good and evil grow together until the end, when the angels 'shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling' (*Matt.* xiii. 41). The kingdom is also a drag-net which gathers every kind of fish, good and bad. That is to say, it is an instrument accomplishing God's purpose of saving men, securing even many who will ultimately be rejected, as well as those who will be ultimately accepted (*Matt.* xiii. 47).

The kingdom therefore consists of persons who are visibly connected with one another. Among these persons there are differences of rank, for he that is 'but little in the kingdom of heaven' is greater than the Baptist (*Matt.* xi. 11). Emulation is not unlawful. But it must be emulation not for office, but for service: 'Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant' (*Matt.* xx. 26). It is a society of brothers (*Matt.* xxiii. 8), and it will be the duty of St. Peter to 'stablish' his brethren after his repentance (*Luke* xxii. 32). The kingdom of heaven, of which St. Peter received the keys, must necessarily have a visible outward form, it must be a society to which men can be admitted and from which they can be excluded. To this society Christ gives the name of 'my Church':

'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (*Matt.* xvi. 18 f.).

**The kingdom of Jesus.**—The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of His Son, who founds and administers it. He definitely calls His own the kingdom where He has sown the good seed (*Matt.* xiii. 41). In heaven the kingdom has been received by Him since He departed from this world (*Luke* xix. 12). He promises to come in His kingdom in the lifetime of His disciples (*Matt.*

xvi. 28). And when He tells Pilate 'my kingdom is not of this world,' He shows that the heavenly kingdom is His own (*John* xviii. 36). He is himself 'the King' who shall judge the nations at the last day (*Matt.* xxv. 34), and the faithful disciples shall 'eat and drink at my table in my kingdom' (*Luke* xxii. 30). The kingdom of the Son, as a kingdom of a saving redemptive character, will then have terminated. The mediatorial work of the King will be completed. It will end when, as St. Paul says, 'he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father' (*1 Cor.* xv. 24).

**Can we define the kingdom?**—The kingdom of God is a power of such wideness and complexity that no exact definition is possible. We have seen that it expresses the highest good for man. It is both a sphere of life, and a society of persons. It is both the influence of God within the soul here and now, and His reign of perfect righteousness and joy hereafter. In our Lord's teaching on the subject there is infinite variety, but no contradiction. It is the reign of God in the hearts and conduct of His children, a reign which was embodied in the whole character of Jesus Christ, which has expanded in the life of the Church, and will be perfected at the second coming of our Lord.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD—I

**The worth of a soul.**—To understand what kind of righteousness is necessary in the kingdom of God, we must understand on what that righteousness is founded. It is founded on the truth that God is our Father, and that God values every human soul. Even this does not express the matter fully enough. It is more just to say that God values and loves every single *life*. Our Lord healed men's bodies as well as the bruised spirit, and taught us that our bread and our clothing are God's concern. Never before in the history of the world was such reverence shown towards man, woman, and child, as was shown by Jesus Christ. He proclaimed that little children have a right to be respected and a right to the good things of the kingdom :

‘And they brought unto him little children, that he should touch them : and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me ; forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them’ (*Mark* x. 13-16).

And again—

‘See that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven’ (*Matt.* xviii. 10).

Not only then has the soul of a child the same right of access to God as the soul of a man, but the man must learn something from the child. The Christian is not required to live in an intellectual doll's house. The

man is to 'put away childish things.' But he is to keep and cultivate those qualities of trustfulness in God, of purity and humility, which lead us to see what is most true and beautiful.

Women are also called to a position which the civilisation of the ancient world did not win for them. In fact it can be fairly maintained that increased culture in Greece, Rome, and India, lowered rather than raised the position of women. Our Lord treated them as spiritually the equals of man. And St. Luke, who seems to have depended for part of his narrative on the evidence supplied by Joanna, the wife of Cbuza, delicately gives prominence to women in his Gospel. Jesus sometimes made His home in the house of Lazarus and his sister Martha, and his other sister Mary, who chose 'the good part, which shall not be taken away from her' (*Luke* x. 42). Such were the little group of women who followed Him and 'ministered unto him of their substance' (*Luke* viii. 3). And, above all, the years that He spent with His blessed virgin Mother, whose soul was pierced for His sake (*Luke* ii. 35), and pondered in her heart the things connected with His birth (*Luke* ii. 19), tell us that duty done at home is the divinely appointed preparation for duty in the world.

**Repentance and Sin** —The first form which righteousness takes is repentance. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance which is attached to repentance in the New Testament. The beginning of our Lord's teaching was, 'Repent ye, and believe in the gospel' (*Mark* i. 15). The apostles pursued the same method. They tried to deepen in men a sense of sin, and to lead them to a changed mind. St. John the Baptist had administered 'a baptism unto repentance'; they administered a baptism which expressed not only sorrow for sin but also faith in Jesus. Repentance is much more than regret or sorrow. It is a change of mind, an acceptance of God's will and the determination to do that will. Our eternal destiny depends upon repentance because it is the attitude of our self towards sin, just as faith is our attitude towards God and holiness. It has a definite aim, an aim which must be clearly before it from the first, and that aim is the putting away of sin.

Our Lord never minutely defines sin. He assumes that sin exists, and that it is universal. It is described as the 'mistake' of a man who misses his way, as the 'transgression' of some particular command of God. It is 'lawlessness' violating God's law as a whole. It is also regarded by Jesus as a state of slavery. 'Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin' (*John* viii. 34). It may also be truly described as a state of death, as it implies separation from God, the source of all life. When the Father welcomes home His prodigal son He says, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again' (*Luke* xv. 24). The forgiveness of a man's sins by God follows on his repentance. It occupies a most prominent part in the teaching of our Lord, who compares it with the cancelling of a debt of ten thousand talents (*Matt.* xviii. 24), and himself dispenses forgiveness to the contrite soul. The first blessing of the kingdom offered to men is the forgiveness of their sins. When a man struck down by paralysis was brought to Him, our Lord first healed the disease of his soul. To the astonishment of the Scribes He said, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven' (*Matt.* ix. 2). He taught His disciples to pray for forgiveness:

'Forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us' (*Luke* xi. 4).

Every kind of sin can be forgiven, except that sin which by its very nature excludes repentance:

'Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin' (*Mark* iii. 29).

The passage must be studied as a whole. It shows that the Scribes who had said that Beelzebub was the cause of the works done by Jesus were in danger of this blasphemy, their moral nature being so corrupt that they could no longer tell the difference between good and evil. They were in danger of sinning away the power of repentance, and therefore of salvation.

In spite of the terrible nature of sin, it is a means of calling out all the love of God. His compassion is shown in the work of Jesus, and in that 'joy' which is in heaven 'over one sinner that repenteth' (*Luke* xv. 7).

**Righteousness is (1) love and faith.**—In the language of the Bible 'righteousness' means conformity with God's

requirements. If God is our Father and attaches an infinite value to every human soul, the righteousness which He requires must be love and faith. Our Lord solemnly ratifies the teaching of the Old Testament that the two great commandments are to love God 'with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,' and to love thy neighbour 'as thyself' (*Mark* xii. 30, 31). If a man fulfils these commandments, he is doing what God requires. In the first three Gospels 'faith' specially means a conviction that God places himself at the service of His children, and the certainty that all things are possible with God (*Luke* xviii. 27; *Mark* x. 27). This is put into a proverbial form when our Lord says,

'Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it' (*Mark* xi. 23).

And a concrete instance of the faith that He required is given when the disciples were terrified by the storm on the Sea of Tiberias, and Christ, after causing the wind to cease, said to them, 'Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?' (*Mark* iv. 40).

Trust in the power of Jesus Christ is a trust which must accompany the belief that He is the Son of God. Faith in God revealed in Christ is linked with faith in Christ. And in St. John's Gospel faith is the belief 'that Jesus is the Son of God,' and those who believe in the Father are told by Him to 'believe also in me' (*John* xiv. 1). When therefore St. Paul declared that 'faith working through love' (*Gal.* v. 6) is the one great principle of the Christian life, he meant nothing that contradicts his own assertion that 'circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God' (*1 Cor.* vii. 19). For the commandments of God are not kept, unless our observance of them flows from a positive principle of active and devoted love.

Righteousness is therefore primarily inward. The Gospel reveals to us not only the worth of the individual man, but also the worth of the inner man. The tendency



of the Pharisees was not the desire to be righteous, but the desire to be thought righteous. They desired the praise of man, and in winning it exhausted all the reward they could ever get (*Matt.* vi. 2, 5, 16). God gives nothing to those who merely perform actions which are only outwardly correct and edifying. The Christian may seek a reward, but it is the reward of communion with God, and God's gift to us of that which adds to the progress of His kingdom. A man must learn to pray in 'the closet' of his heart, alone with God, and, to use St. Paul's word, 'buffet' his sinful and selfish desires in secret; he must learn to give alms with no desire for applause, so that his left hand does not know what his right hand doeth (*Matt.* vi. 3). He must train himself to conceal his fasts by his cheerfulness (*Matt.* vi. 17). When he has trained himself to 'do his righteousness' in this way, God will recompense him, and perhaps do it openly by calling him out into the world to raise the standard of social virtue. Our sole motive must be the inward desire of serving God, of loving God in man, and man in God. This is the 'single eye,' or 'sound eye.' In the body illumination depends on the eye; the brain does not deal properly with an external object unless the eye is sound and the sight not distorted. So in the moral sphere, we shall only move rightly when our motives are directed straight towards God (*Matt.* vi. 22, 23).

**The austerity of the Gospel.**—Our righteousness must 'exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees' (*Matt.* v. 20). It must embrace the whole character. If the tree is good, the fruit will be good; but if the tree is corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt. Men ordinarily think that the tongue need not be controlled severely, that a word is a mere breath carried away by the air. But our Lord teaches that we shall be confronted by our words at the day of judgment. They will influence our eternal destiny:

'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned' (*Matt.* xii. 36, 37).

His teaching with regard to anger, lust, oaths, and revenge, transformed the teaching of the Old Testament

by carrying into the very recesses of the soul the prescriptions which had only appeared to affect the outward act. 'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement' (*Matt.* v. 21, 22). The Jewish law forbade murder; Jesus forbids that passion which desires a brother's harm and is the source of murder. So too the law forbade adultery. Jesus forbids a violation of the law of purity in look or thought; condemning not the involuntary intrusion of a temptation, but all deliberate cherishing of such a temptation (*Matt.* v. 28). The law upheld the sanctity of an oath; Jesus condemns all swearing 'by' this or that, and declares that a simple 'yes' or 'no' ought to be as sacred and binding as a promise made with the most solemn sanction that could be devised (*Matt.* v. 33 ff.). The law limited revenge and laid down the nature of punishment, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; Jesus prohibits revenge. He lays such stress upon the duty of patiently enduring injury rather than requiting it that He seems to mean that the limit of such patience is to be fixed by the welfare of the offender himself. 'Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,' is a command which must not be so acted upon as to cause the smiter to attack his inoffensive neighbours indefinitely. But if the endurance of an injury can be made the means of 'gaining thy brother' (*Matt.* xviii. 15), then it ought to be endured. And lastly, the law required men to love their neighbours, and Jewish exclusiveness had fostered the belief that it was legitimate and praiseworthy to hate an enemy. But Jesus enjoins men to love their enemies and pray for those that persecute them. By such love as this, and by nothing short of this, 'Ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust' (*Matt.* v. 45).

Righteousness (ii) implies humility.—A sense of God's perfection and of man's imperfection and responsibility begets humility. The humility taught by Christ is totally different from the unmanly pettiness of mind

which the Greek condemned, and from the morbid disgust with life and self which the Indian Buddhists praised. Jesus showed us that as we draw near to God we grow conscious of our own unworthiness. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the Temple to pray, illustrates the truth that to be 'justified,' pardoned and accepted by God, we must not boast of goodness, but aspire towards goodness by confessing sin and putting it away:

'For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted' (*Luke xviii. 14*).

Another illustration is derived by our Lord from ordinary social life. A man invited to a marriage feast takes the chief seat and the host compels him to leave it for the sake of a more honourable guest:

'But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in the presence of all that sit at meat with thee. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted' (*Luke xiv. 10, 11*).

It is not degradation but exaltation through humility which we are encouraged to seek. The repression of self is not an end, but a means, a recoil to be followed by a leap forward. It is the rule of all sure progress. No art and no science can be acquired without the capacity to submit and to learn. And spiritual humility consists in learning of Jesus, who says, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart' (*Matt. xi. 29*). The rule that He taught, He followed first himself; and we read how He performed the office of a slave at the last meal that He ate with His disciples before His death. He washed their feet and said:

'Ye call me, Master, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you' (*John xiii. 12 ff.*).

Righteousness implies (iii) active service.—The love and faith which are the ground of forgiveness (see *Luke* vii. 36-50), and are deepened by forgiveness, will express themselves spontaneously in the service of God:

‘He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him’ (*John* xiv. 21).

Love sets all the powers of the soul in motion. And the way of righteousness is not easy, for it is entered by a narrow gate and demands a strenuous life. The Christian life requires watchfulness, fidelity, hard work. Christ’s disciples are described as labourers, stewards, servants as well as friends. The faithful and business-like use of even one talent by the servant to whom it is entrusted, is commended as not merely good but necessary under pain of punishment (*Matt.* xxv. 27). The parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard shows us well both the gracious interest of God in all who come to serve Him, and the uncalculating spirit in which the service ought to be rendered. The men who have no opportunity of working for God until the ‘eleventh hour,’ receive the same recompense as those who have toiled all day. The purpose of the parable is to rebuke idleness, to encourage those who began their work late, and to check the jealousy of those who began their work early. God does not deal with us on the legal principle of debit and credit. He expects us to find joy in working for Him. This work is itself in a large measure its own reward, and to be jealous about payment is to show a misapprehension of the goodness of God (*Matt.* xx. 1 ff.).

The ungrudging character of the service which we owe to God is shown in the stern parable which ends with the command—

‘Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do’ (*Luke* xvii. 10).

If the parable stood alone, it would seem harsh. For it implies a parallel between God and a master who makes his servant work in the fields by day and then in the

house in the evening, and yet gives the servant no thanks. But the principle is exactly that principle which inspired St. Paul and so many of God's saints. Our Lord never meant that our Father in heaven is a hard Task-master. But He meant us to realise that we never can do enough for God, never repay what we owe to Him. And the corresponding truth is that we can never make a compact with God, never say 'I will do so much, if thou wilt give me so much.' That is a return to the law. But the religion which Christ has taught us is a religion of 'grace,' that is, of the undeserved loving-kindness of God to man, who will give us more than we deserve, and even more than we desire.

Righteousness implies (iv) devotion to Jesus Christ.—The Gospel of grace concerns not only our relation to the Father but our relation to Jesus Christ. Our attitude towards Him will determine our future throughout eternity. 'Eternal punishment' and 'eternal life' will depend upon our mercy or lack of mercy shown towards the needy and the desolate in whose person Christ comes to us (*Matt. xxv. 40 ff.*). Our ideal of life must be His ideal. His complete dependence upon the Father is expressed in the words 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me' (*John iv. 34*). This obedience to the will of the Father led Jesus to the Cross. And the imitation of Christ on our part must include the bearing of any cross that God may lay upon us:

'Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple' (*Luke xiv. 27*). He certainly claims the first place in our affections, as when He says, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me' (*Matt. x. 37*). This appears in a severer and more paradoxical form in *Luke xiv. 26*, where He says, 'If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' These strong words imply that where our duty to Christ is at stake, no pain of separation or alienation from those nearest to us must make us falter. The 'work' that God requires of us is the moral effort of believing in Him whom God hath sent (*John vi. 29*). We must place ourselves at His disposal without any reserve. We are to 'hate' and 'lose' our natural

life for the sake of a better and 'more abundant' life, a life richer in experience and more potent in influence. And we are to do this relying on His words, 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it' (*Mark* viii. 35).

**Prayer.**—There is one duty which so intimately concerns the individual soul that it must be included in any account of the righteousness which God requires. It is the duty of prayer. Prayer indeed brings a special blessing when it is united prayer. The Lord's Prayer which He taught to His disciples is a prayer taught to all in common. If two persons agree together to seek some blessing in prayer, they can pray with a special assurance (*Matt.* xviii. 19). And wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, He has promised to be in the midst of them (*Matt.* xviii. 20). But no effectual prayer can be made in common until each one who prays has himself learned how to draw nigh to God.

The Gospels record positive instances of our Lord praying. They cover the whole of His public life from His baptism to His death. Of these instances seven are recorded by St. Luke alone. The evangelist who gives more prominence than the other two Synoptic writers to the work of the Holy Spirit, gives special prominence to prayer which that Holy Spirit prompts. Christ prayed for himself before His Passion, He prayed for His whole Church, and He assured St. Peter, 'I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not' (*Luke* xxii. 32).

The parable of the Friend who at midnight disturbs another man teaches us that prayer is never out of season and may rightly be importunate (*Luke* xi. 5); and the parable of the Unjust Judge, who at length yields to the entreaty of a widow, teaches the same lesson of perseverance in another form (*Luke* xviii. 1).

The disposition with which we must offer prayer is shown in the humility of the publican who cries 'God be merciful to me a sinner' (*Luke* xviii. 13); and the prayer which the Prodigal Son meant to make to his father shows us how rich the reward of genuine humility may be (*Luke* xv. 18). The great stress which is laid upon the necessity of a forgiving spirit in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (*Matt.* xviii. 21) is proportionate



to the difficulty of this spirit. Watchfulness is also needful (*Mark* xiii. 33), and faith :

‘All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them’ (*Mark* xi. 24).

Primarily we must pray to be delivered from temptation, that is, from all circumstances and all states of mind which might to us in our actual stage of spiritual progress be a means of transgression, though to others they might be means of progress (*Matt.* vi. 13). We are to pray for our enemies, such prayer being one of the best tests of forgiveness (*Luke* vi. 28). We should also pray for our temporal gifts, for ‘daily bread,’ and deliverance from calamities (*Mark* xiii. 18). We are to pray also for a supply of missionaries who shall convert the world (*Matt.* ix. 38). We are not to repeat prayers as if they were a magical formula (*Matt.* vi. 7). That is merely heathen.

Above all, when we pray to the Father we are to pray in the name of Jesus Christ (*John* xvi. 23). No prayer is true prayer unless it is consistent with what we know about the Person, work, and character of our Lord. If it is to be true, we must be led, as He was led, by the Spirit of God. It must have the reverence, humility, and simplicity of Him who was ‘heard for his godly fear’ (*Heb.* v. 7).

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD—II

Our Lord and social life.—The heart of the life of Jesus Christ on earth was renunciation and detachment. But He founded a new humanism. He set His face against the cruder Oriental conceptions of a saint. Though He retired to the wilderness and the mountains, He did so for the sake of that communion with the Father which strengthened Him for intercourse with men. He even sought the society of men and women, and gladly accepted their hospitality. St. John records His presence at the marriage of Cana, where He turned the water into wine to provide means for the feast, and a symbol of the transformation of religion which He was about to effect (*John* ii. 1 ff.). He attended the feast which Levi made in His honour even though ‘many publicans and sinners’ were there (*Mark* ii. 15). He said to Zacchæus, the chief publican, ‘To-day I must abide at thy house’ (*Luke* xix. 5). He sat down at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, where the ‘woman that was in the city, a sinner,’ poured the contents of an alabaster cruse of ointment over His feet (*Luke* vii. 36 ff.). He accepted the invitation of another Pharisee to dine with him, and made use of the opportunity to point out the difference between a ceremonial washing and inward purity of heart (*Luke* xi. 37). He frequented the house of Lazarus and his sisters at Bethany, and St. John says, ‘Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus’ (*John* xi. 5). Among His friends, Jesus loved one friend best, and gave His sanction to distinctive friendship by this affection for St. John. His own prayer for His disciples was, ‘I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil’ (*John* xvii. 15). The attitude of the Christian towards the world should not

be one of pessimism, but one of humble courage and hope.

**The Family.**—Our Lord regarded marriage as a matter of such great importance that, instead of laying down merely general principles concerning it, He gave a precise and emphatic law. We should, before quoting this law, notice that the title *Father* which He gives to God proves the sacred character of the analogy which existed in His mind between a human family and the nature of God. Our Lord's treatment of women and His condemnation of a deliberately cherished impure desire also show His regard for a right relation between the two sexes. The comparatively easy conditions on which Jewish husbands were allowed to put away their wives, He treats as a concession to a bygone state of society. The laxer school of Jewish rabbis, that of Hillel, permitted divorce for slight provocations, such as the law never contemplated. The stricter school only permitted it in case of adultery. The teaching of Jesus is that the original plan of God was that a man should have one wife only :

‘But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and the twain shall become one flesh : so that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder’ (*Mark* x. 6-8).

The law is plainly laid down. Just as a brother may be separated from his brother, but cannot cease to be his brother, so marriage is an unbreakable bond. Husband and wife remain husband and wife while life remains.

The teaching of our Lord as recorded in *Mark* x. 11, 12, and *Luke* xvi. 18, asserts the general principle that a man may not put away his wife. In *Matthew* we find a puzzling addition, ‘except for fornication’ (v. 32 ; xix. 9). This undoubtedly raises great difficulties, for it has led to the opinion that a man may actually separate from him an unfaithful wife in such a way as to be free to marry again. This seems neither to agree with our Lord's statements in the other Gospels, nor with the general drift of St. Paul's teaching (1 *Cor.* vii. 10, 11). Hence it has been supposed that these words in *Matthew*

are an interpolation made by a Jewish Christian who lowered our Lord's doctrine concerning divorce to the level of the higher of the two Jewish opinions about divorce, or that they have been caused by some erroneous tradition of the Jewish Christians. It is not impossible that the passage in *Matthew* v. 32 has been influenced by the tradition preserved in *xix.* 9. In the latter passage there is a direct reference to the common practice of the Jews to dismiss a wife 'for every cause,' and marry another. Our Lord says that this is adultery, but treats the man who has put away an unfaithful wife, as not guilty of adultery. In neither passage does Christ command or counsel a new marriage even when a wife is unfaithful; He merely abstains from saying that one who dismisses such a wife is guilty. Permission is given for a separation. But the woman, so put away, continues to be the wife of him who put her away. She is regarded as such in both passages. This shows that whether the text has been corrupted or not, an innocent husband is not free to marry when he has put away his wife.

**Civic duties.**—Our Lord seems to have made very few allusions to civic duties and political questions. But He recognised the province of civil authority and civil justice. He assumes that it is necessary for a man to agree with his adversary quickly, lest the judge deliver him to the officer, and he be cast into prison until he has paid the last farthing (*Matt.* v. 25, 26). More important was His refusal to be entangled in a political controversy. The Pharisees and Herodians asked whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or not. He asked them to show Him a penny:

'And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's. And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's' (*Mark* xii. 13 ff.).

This answer contains two points, the first intended to touch His questioners, the second to influence all men. He first shows the Pharisees that they accepted Cæsar's sovereignty by using his coinage, and they therefore had no right to complain of paying taxes to Cæsar. Then He shows that this obligation is trifling compared with their obligation to God. The kingdom of God is both

independent of the civil government and infinitely higher. They made the kingdom of God equivalent to the political autonomy of their people. He implies that it is not. In the same way He told St. Peter to pay the half-shekel tribute for the support of the Temple service, both for himself and St. Peter. And He did this in spite of the fact that He and His disciples were, in His eyes, free from the requirement to maintain these services (*Matt. xvii. 24 ff.*). Our Lord did nothing whatever to countenance anarchy or revolution. He allowed no kind of resistance to the men whom the Sanhedrin sent to arrest Him. His enemies were quite unable to find that He was a law-breaker. And Pilate doubtless spoke the truth when he said that he could find no fault in Him (*Luke xxiii. 14*).

In disclaiming any political character for the kingdom of God, He disclaimed any political power for himself. He withdrew from the people who 'were about to come and take him by force, to make him king' (*John vi. 15*). And when two of His disciples asked for places by His side in the glory of what they probably conceived as an earthly kingdom, He said :

'Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them ; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you : but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all' (*Mark x. 42 ff.*).

There is a pathetic significance in the question addressed to Jesus by the two messengers sent by the Baptist—'Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?' (*Luke vii. 20*). It was so natural that the question should be asked by one who with earnest sincerity had fixed his hopes on Jesus as the Messiah from the time of His baptism. The work of Jesus seemed to him so slow, so disappointing. He had expected the rigorous reform of 'axe' and 'fire' and 'winnowing-fan.' And instead of this, men were being healed one by one, and the Gospel was being preached to the poor. The regeneration of individuals, not the formation of a new secular state, was our Lord's method.

**Worldly possessions.**—Our Lord directly refused to

interfere in a question of family property. He would not divide an inheritance between two brothers. And He immediately turned the incident into a great lesson :

‘Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness : for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth’ (*Luke* xii. 15).

He found that the love of riches was a great obstacle to the life of faith. ‘The deceitfulness of riches’ is apt to ‘choke the word’ sown by His hands (*Mark* iv. 19). ‘Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also’ (*Matt.* vi. 21). Trade and working for money are not condemned by our Lord. A man may be so absorbed in his farm or his merchandise as to neglect the gracious invitation of the King (*Matt.* xxii. 5). But it is impossible that our Lord could have uttered parables such as that of the Talents (*Matt.* xxv. 14) and that of the Pounds (*Luke* xix. 11), if He had disapproved of commerce and of the accumulation of interest on money. All the evangelists tell us how He ejected the money-changers from the Temple. He objected, not to their money, but to their dishonesty and profanity. He does not condemn property, nor does He make poverty a general condition of salvation. But there is a case where He seems to do so. When the rich man asked Him, ‘What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?’ and declared that he had kept the commandments from his youth, our Lord wished to test him. He said, ‘If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow me’ (*Matt.* xix. 21). The man went away sorrowful. Our Lord had unveiled the one duty necessary in view of his position and his request, the one weakness which undermined his character. But Christ does not tell us that worldly possessions are evil. They may be an instrument of good. God knows that we have need of food and clothing (*Matt.* vi. 32). And by means of ‘the mammon of unrighteousness,’ the wealth which ‘a steward of unrighteousness’ uses with worldly cunning, we are to make friends who shall receive us into the eternal tabernacles of heaven. We are to help those who cannot repay us here, but will welcome us in a world where distinctions of class and wealth are gone.

**Love of our neighbour.**—It would be impossible for us to discuss even briefly all that Jesus Christ teaches us concerning our duty to our neighbour. The command 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' is a command to be generous, truthful, and helpful towards all men. The parable of the good Samaritan, who though a despised schismatic, aided the wounded traveller whom the priest and the Levite neglected, tells us who is our 'neighbour.' In the moment of extreme necessity we would be glad to receive help even from one whose race and whose religion we regarded as inferior to our own. And therefore we ought to regard him as our neighbour, and our natural likes and dislikes must give way to a generous sympathy with all men. Here as in all things the command to be 'perfect' requires that we should be willing to do what God does. We are not even to hope for forgiveness from God if we do not forgive others: 'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (*Matt.* vi. 15). The merciless servant who when forgiven by his master refused to forgive his fellow-servant withdraws himself from God's pity (*Matt.* xviii. 21 ff.). We are to show the light of 'good works' to others (*Matt.* v. 16). We are to be truthful, our 'yea' is to be 'yea,' and our 'nay' is to be 'nay.' We are to abstain from oaths, for the very use of oaths suggests a difference between the thought in the heart and the word that is spoken. Love requires that we should not judge others:

'For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you' (*Matt.* vii. 2).

When there has been a quarrel, we are not to bring a gift to the altar till we have obeyed the precept 'first be reconciled to thy brother' (*Matt.* v. 23). Real love for God and for men will also cause us to be prudent in imparting divine truth; we are not to give what is holy unto the dogs, or cast pearls before the swine (*Matt.* vii. 6).

Love of our neighbour is also taught us in some startling paradoxes. Not only are Christ's disciples told to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors, but they are also given this command:

'To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer



also the other ; and from him that taketh away thy cloke withhold not thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh thee ; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again' (*Luke vi. 29, 30*).

There is also the command to forgive a brother who wrongs us until 'seventy times seven' (*Matt. xviii. 22*). It is not surprising that some difference of opinion should exist among Christians as to the interpretation of such startling commands. And the difficulty is not entirely removed by the explanation that these commands were not intended for the Church of future days, but only for the little band or family of disciples that followed our Lord on earth. The writer of this book humbly believes that Christ deliberately put these commands into a form intended to stimulate our thought. If He had given moral directions on the level of those given by the Baptist (*Luke iii. 10 ff.*), the result might have been a new Pharisaism. Men would have done these things more or less precisely, and then been satisfied. But our Lord's commands make self-satisfaction impossible. They are sometimes quite legal in form, but their purpose is to abolish legalism, and to interpret them always literally would be a return to legalism. They suggest that our love, a love like that of God for man, must be its own law. The commands are in a form which will always be in front of us and above us. Our action in each particular case must be determined by the good of the particular person with whom we are dealing. And our Lord's own life is the best explanation of His precepts. He never either gave or forgave in a manner which would encourage a man to be slothful or unjust. When smitten unjustly at His trial before Annas, He said, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : but if well, why smitest thou me?' (*John xviii. 23*). That was an appeal to the reason and conscience of the man who hit Him, not less truly than His amazing forgiveness is an appeal to the heart. The essence of the doctrine contained in these great paradoxes of our Lord is, in St. Paul's words :

'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good' (*Rom. xii. 21*).

**The Beatitudes.**—We have reserved to the end of these

two chapters on Righteousness a short consideration of those Beatitudes in which our Lord described the happiness of the Christian life. The virtues of which He speaks are the characteristics of His own life. They tell us the blessedness which He attained in His own human experience, in spite of all the difference which exists between Him and us. Blessedness is both the condition and the completion of a perfect life. And those who have the qualities which Jesus commends are already blessed, and even now enjoy the kingdom of heaven:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.’ (*Matt. v. 3-11*).

A blessedness which begins with poverty and mourning and ends on earth with persecution, shows how truly we ourselves, and not our surroundings, are the cause of happiness. The environment which suggests misery may be the very environment which is best for the perfect life. The ‘poor in spirit’ who do not say that they are whole, or think that they are already righteous, are blessed. The character which says ‘I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing’ is ‘miserable and poor and blind and naked’ (*Rev. iii. 17*). Those who ‘mourn’ over sin and evil, who have a real sorrow for sin, shall be comforted. An abiding sorrow for sin is one of the secrets of real progress in the spiritual life. The ‘meek’ who in their dealings with their fellow

men are what Jesus was, men who curb all resentment under provocation, legitimately gain the earth. They are successful both in enjoying life and in influencing history. Meekness, in the Christian sense of the word, is not weakness. The strength of man may be proved even more by forgiveness than by suffering. 'Those who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' are blessed. It is not enough to be true to our ideal if our ideal is lower than God. The hunger to be right with God, and to make our own the righteousness of Christ, should be our desire, and it is a desire which God will satisfy. The 'merciful' are blessed. It is necessary to exercise that pity which we ourselves will one day hope to receive from God. We shall have in proportion as we have assimilated. The 'pure in heart' whose intention is single, so that at least in intention and desire their thoughts and aims are clean and unsullied, shall see God now and hereafter. The things which hide God from us are the things that we put between the heart and Him. The 'peacemakers' are blessed, all who act as true ambassadors of God, all who work for an upright peace in a family or in a State, all who pray and labour for the union of God's Church, are promised the joy of a filial confidence in God. The 'persecuted' are blessed. The death of Jesus is a revelation of what He truly is. His action under calumny and ill treatment illustrated and brought to perfection His power of ruling over the kingdom of heaven. He was glorified, not inwardly degraded, by His death. Utter devotion to God, a service that knew no limit, such was the righteousness that He showed in dying; and it 'overcame the world.' He attained to the completion of blessedness through this conflict with evil and conquest over evil. So the Christian may be called to realise his best self through a process of calumny and martyrdom. In so doing he manifests the life of Christ; and through submission to wrong he learns to master himself and very often is raised to rule others to the glory of God.

It is true to say that the qualities which bring blessedness are submissive, gentle, and marked by the absence of self-assertion. But it is very far from true to say that these qualities are negative, or merely yielding and feminine. It requires no easy struggle for a man to

forgive an injury or to gain purity of heart. To maintain a hunger for righteousness and to be a peacemaker are incompatible with sloth and idle acquiescence in things as they are. Our Lord never teaches us to ignore the duty which we owe to self while performing our duty to our neighbour. The character which He requires in men is a manly character like His own. But it is a character which has gained strength through the knowledge of weakness, and become righteous by faith in the righteousness of God communicated to us through Jesus Christ.

**Jesus Christ and Asceticism.**—Men sometimes discuss whether our Lord's teaching sanctions that form of self-denial which is called asceticism. Now, the word 'asceticism' is ambiguous. Its origin is honourable, it implied a life of 'training,' whether in athletics or in learning. And such a training undoubtedly had a place in Greek life. But the greater inwardness and intensity of Christ's moral teaching require a severer training. We may doubt if a Greek would have understood or sympathised with St. Paul's statement, 'I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage : lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.' The 'mortifying' or making dead of sinful inclinations, and the bringing every thought into subjection unto the obedience of Christ, imply a greater austerity and a greater blessedness than the pagan world had attained. And such asceticism is plainly part of our Lord's teaching ; just as plainly as a scornful neglect of the body and the idea of acquiring merit by self-torture is not part of that teaching. The extreme asceticism of the Oriental hermit or fakir is not in the least Christian.

But the teaching of our Lord, and still more His own example, prove that God sometimes calls men to a life which narrows its own development into one deep channel in order to carry life and vigour to others. Voluntary poverty and voluntary abstinence from marriage may be better for some men than wealth well employed and marriage hallowed by Christ's presence. It is well with those who can say, 'Lo, we have left all, and followed thee' (*Matt.* xix. 27), if they abstain from asking what reward they shall have beyond the love of Jesus. Our Lord does not regard riches as in themselves evil, the parables of the Unjust Steward and the Talents show

that they are a deposit from God to be used in doing good. And yet He denounces woe to those who find their consolation in riches (*Luke* vi. 24), and bids men not to lay up treasures upon earth (*Matt.* vi. 19). And to one in danger of becoming a prey to his wealth He says, 'Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor' (*Matt.* xix. 21). In the same way He blesses marriage, and He made a married man the chief of His apostles. But those who have received the gift of becoming dead, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, to all that marriage implies, are to keep the gift (*Matt.* xix. 12). Those who are convinced that God desires all their time and energy in a manner which is not compatible with marriage, are to remain celibate. The asceticism which our Lord requires is therefore, in the case of all men, a struggle and self-discipline in the conquest of mammon and sensuous desire, and, in some men, the renunciation of all worldly wealth and all worldly ties in view of a special work required by God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR LORD'S TEACHING ABOUT HIS DEATH

**The Death of Christ in the New Testament.**—No one can read the Gospels without noticing how large a space each evangelist devotes to the last sufferings of our Lord. The events of the last sad week are traced with the minute care of thankful and adoring love. Exactly the same impression is produced upon us by nearly all the other writings contained in the New Testament. The 'word' or 'story of the Cross,' as St. Paul calls it (1 *Cor.* i. 18), has an infinite significance in the writers' minds. We rise from reading them with the conviction that the Gospel would not have been the Gospel to them if Jesus had not died, and died by the hands of men. They regard the death as indispensable. They do not believe in a dead Christ, but in a living Christ. They do not proclaim the story of a defeat, but of a magnificent victory. They rejoice in telling that Christ rose from the dead. But the risen Christ bears with Him the power of His death.

They assume, then, that the death of Christ was necessary for our salvation. And it was necessary in this sense, that without it mankind would not be freed from the condemnation which the holy God pronounces upon sin, freed from the corrupting influence of sin and in a living practical union with God. Without it we should not have 'peace' with God, 'access to God,' 'life.' And the Gospels imply the same doctrine as the Epistles and the Revelation. As soon as we understand who our Lord is, this doctrine is seen to rest upon a plain and intelligible foundation. If Jesus Christ were only a very good man, His death could not bring us peace with God. Even the courage which He showed in protesting against sin and in facing the death on the Cross would be less valuable to us than the action of many martyrs and heroes. We should have to confess that He made claims

for himself which were not consistent with any clear notion of His place in the scale of creation, and perhaps not consistent with sincere unselfishness. We should have to regard His death as in some degree the inevitable penalty of His mistakes.

On the other hand, if He is truly Son of Man and Son of God, His death assumes an entirely different aspect. It must in some special sense reveal to us what man ought to be and what God is. The true King of men, the One in whom God is well pleased, must show in dying a character which His subjects can regard as noble to imitate. The Son of the Divine Father, the expression of God in human life, must show what is God's own attitude towards death. And this is what the Gospels tell us. For our Lord so dies that His death is the consummation of a perfect human life, offered to the Father in the service of us men. And He so dies that the wounding of body and soul to which He voluntarily submits, is in proportion to God's love of sinners and desire to rescue them from death. When we see this devotion of Christ trusting in the Father, we must feel that, if we could have offered it to God, it was due from us. And when we see Christ's dying and overcoming death by resurrection, we see vindicated God's deep concern for all mankind: and all mankind is sinful mankind.

**Death.**—It is remarkable that *physical* death is not regarded by our Lord as so terrible and evil a thing as men have usually thought it to be. Death is something which in a higher state of existence will be done away; 'they cannot die any more' (*Luke* xx. 36). It puts an end to earthly wealth and earthly pleasures, as the Rich Man found when told that his soul would be required 'this night' (*Luke* xii. 20). Physical death is nevertheless for those who are at peace with God, rest in sleep (*John* xi. 11; cf. *Matt.* ix. 24). The death which our Lord treats as terrible is the death which is spiritual rather than physical. The 'dead' who are told to bury their dead are those who do not hear His call (*Matt.* viii. 22). In St. John's Gospel it is even more plainly taught that 'death,' like 'life,' belongs to this present world. It is moral apathy, a voluntary separation from God. And the Son of God enables man here and now to pass from



death unto life. Our Lord's use of the words 'death' and 'dead' show that physical death is regarded by Him as a symbol of that more terrible destruction which is the result of sin. It is no capricious symbol, but one which closely corresponds with the actual nature of sin. For sin is not only hostility to the will of God, but is also suicide. It is the killing of that true life which is communion with God, who is 'Life.'

**The Incarnation and Death.**—When the Son of God became Man, He made himself one with a race which had sinned and which so far as sinful was necessarily under God's condemnation. He was himself sinless. He was able to say to His enemies, 'Which of you convicteth me of sin?' (*John* viii. 46). From the beginning to the end the Bible teaches in various ways that mankind is a unity. There is a solidarity, on account of which St. Paul can say, 'none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself' (*Rom.* xiv. 7). And Jesus, being sinless, was able to sorrow over sin with a sorrow which in a measure must be reproduced in His servants, though it cannot be fully reproduced by the greatest of His saints. Sinless, and infinitely wronged by the treachery, hypocrisy, and ambition of men, He still forgave freely and fully. More than this: though He had told His disciples 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do' (*Luke* xii. 4), *His own physical death was terrible to Him.* And we cannot reasonably question that the Apostles and the whole primitive Church were right in believing that He viewed His own death in connection with the sins of the world. In our nature and in our name He entered into a unique understanding of death in a spiritual as well as physical sense. Like the resurrection which followed, this dying was a representative act. It was a homage rendered by the Head of our race to the laws of God. There was nothing mechanical in this homage, and there was nothing fictitious in His spiritual suffering. We can neither know nor tell all that it implied. But we cannot interpret the original preaching of the Gospel unless we believe that He mentally realised the evil of sin and the absence from God which it involves. He did not spiritually die, but He learned the whole meaning of sin, so far as it was

possible to know it without sinning. And His voluntary realisation of the significance of death, physical and spiritual, was a human acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in condemning sin. God condemns the destruction of His children's life, and this destruction is sin. Therefore *God in manifesting His condemnation of sin, manifests His love.*

**The Death of Christ was voluntary.**—The death of our Lord was much more than the mere result of fidelity to righteousness in an unrighteous world. A righteous man, even a saint, might desire to avoid death under the impression that his life would be more useful to others than his death. And a righteous man, even a saint, might only become convinced that God wished him to die, when he saw that death was inevitable. But our Lord chose to die. During the agony which He showed when praying in Gethsemane we can see that He shrank from death. It was physically cruel. And it was morally terrible to Him because in His sinless purity He realised the true nature of sin and its results. But both before and after the agony He wished to die, and showed that He could have saved himself from death, if He had so willed. He came 'to give his life' (*Mark x. 45*). Once more He says:

‘I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again’ (*John x. 11, 17 f.*).

Men sometimes speak as if it were unjust for the innocent to suffer for the benefit of the guilty. But when we think how fruitful is the law of vicarious suffering, of the moral development which it brings to the sufferer and often to the persons for whom the suffering is endured, we shall never speak of injustice as involved in Christ's atoning death. Many a parent has suffered, and even chosen to suffer, for a child, many a friend for a friend, many have met death even in teaching or tending the guilty and outcast. And if the Son of God so loved us as to become man for our sakes, it was not unjust that He should live by that great law of suffering

for the good of others which does so much to elevate mankind.

Jesus came into the world to die.—At first sight it may seem strange that Jesus says comparatively little about the necessity of His death as a means for effecting our salvation. But on reflection we shall see a good reason for this. During our Lord's ministry it was very difficult for His disciples to realise who He really was, and still more difficult for them to think that the Son of God and Messiah could die at all. For them to know that He was far more than human, and that He must nevertheless die like a man, must have been most difficult. He could therefore only teach them gradually. But what He taught was in His own mind from the first. The theory that He did not foresee His death until near the end of His ministry contradicts the evidence of the Gospels as completely as the theory that He did not attribute to His death the power of obtaining the remission of sins.

Christ's earlier teaching about His Death.—All the Gospels tell us something about our Lord's Baptism. Other men came to John the Baptist 'confessing their sins'; Christ made no such confession. But His Baptism was much more than a mere approval of the Baptist's message. For in the eyes of the Jews who surrounded Him, baptism implied an acknowledgment of sin and repentance. And by submitting to baptism our Lord showed openly that He made himself at one with a race which had sinned, and that He took upon himself part at least of the responsibility of sin. That this interpretation is correct is proved by the voice of the Father heard by Christ at His Baptism (*Matt.* iii. 17; *Mark* i. 11; *Luke* iii. 22). These words partly correspond with *Isaiah* xlii. 1 ff. They show that our Lord before the beginning of His ministry was conscious that He fulfilled the ancient prophet's picture of the Servant of the Lord, who dies as a *guilt-offering* for the people. Our Lord afterwards made His own (*Luke* xxii. 37) the words of *Isa.* liii. 12, 'He was reckoned with transgressors,' which show that He certainly regarded himself as 'the Servant of the Lord.' A *guilt-offering* is essentially a sacrifice offered to make satisfaction and reparation for the infringement of some right or the withholding of something due. Christ therefore

identified himself both with a race that has sinned, and with the Servant who obtains their pardon by making a reparation to the heart of the divine Father. Very early in our Lord's ministry He referred to His death in a manner which shows that it cast a solemn shadow over His life: 'Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day' (*Mark* ii. 19, 20). This taking away of the bridegroom is not only death, but death in the midst of joy, a death which is unexpected by the bridegroom's friends.

Another early and more enigmatic reference to His death is contained in His words to the Jews, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (*John* ii. 19). It was also early in His ministry that He said to Nicodemus:

'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life' (*John* iii. 14, 15; cf. viii. 28, xii. 32).

Our Lord's knowledge of His death was combined with a knowledge of its divinely appointed necessity. He has to submit to the 'baptism' of His Passion, and feels anguish until it is accomplished. He dreads it, and yet He desires it, because it will kindle a fervent devotion to himself (*Luke* xii. 49).

Our Lord's later teaching.—After St. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi had confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, He openly instructed His disciples concerning His death. Their conception of His work was to grow with their conception of His Person. 'From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem and be killed' (*Matt.* xvi. 21). The notion that the Messiah should suffer was at first intolerable to the disciples, an actual contradiction of their idea of the Messiahship. Hence St. Peter's protest, 'Be it far from thee, Lord.' He had to familiarise them with the idea of the coming tragedy. All the three Synoptists say that He made at least three deliberate attempts to do this (*Mark* viii. 31; ix. 31; x. 33; and the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke). The last passage is of peculiar

importance. Our Lord has for the third time declared that He will be put to death. Then James and John, realising perhaps that this death would be the path to victory, express the wish that they may have places of honour in His kingdom. Our Lord asks if they are able to drink of the cup which He drinks of, and be baptized with the baptism with which He is baptized. Both these two words refer to His death. The cup is a cup which fills the heart with fear, and is received from God's hand (*Mark* xiv. 36; cf. *John* xviii. 11). The baptism is a flood which carries Him away. James and John declare that they are able to endure this cup and this baptism. Christ promises them that they shall do so, but does not promise them thrones of glory. He afterwards continues:

‘Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your servant: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be bond-servant of all. For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many’ (*Mark* x. 43-45).

This word ‘ransom’ is a word used in the Old Testament. It means a price offered for a life. Jesus our King reveals His glory in humiliation and service, and this service necessitates the giving up of His own life in order to purchase from bondage the lives which have been previously brought into bondage. No doubt there is a metaphor in this. But the metaphor is used to explain a most solemn fact. Our Lord teaches that His life is to be the means of recovering or saving the lives of others from the power of sin and God's judgment upon sin. *Psalms* xlix. 7 f. and *Mark* viii. 34 f. make this clear. The first passage asserts that no man can give to God a ransom with the result that his brother can live for ever. The second passage teaches us that when our true life is forfeited as the result of sin, we cannot by ourselves deliver it. But Christ wins it back, not by any literal barter, but by means of the life that He gave up in the service of God and man. So long as

we are bound by guilt we are under sentence of spiritual death. And the possibility of our freedom from guilt depends upon our availing ourselves of Christ's devotion of His own life in love, a devotion which found its climax in 'the death of the Cross.' Christ therefore does for us what no one else can do.

Jesus is the Saviour.—That our Lord through dying delivers man from sin and the sense of guilt was the actual experience of the first believers and, since then, the experience of multitudes that no man can number. He is called in the Gospels 'he that shall save his people from their sins,' 'the Saviour,' 'the Saviour of the world.' It was not perhaps with any exclusive reference to His death that He said to Zacchæus,

'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost' (*Luke* xix. 10).

And yet St. Paul, St. Peter, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, regard His death as essential to the work of ransoming, saving, liberating man. The same truth is expressed in different words in one book of the New Testament after another. Jesus died for the same object as that for which He lived, and still lives, our salvation. To die was therefore a manifestation of His glory. In St. John's Gospel we find that He regards His crucifixion as the fulfilment of His mission on earth. His exaltation on the Cross is regarded as a step towards His exaltation into heaven. After He had entered into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His death, He said, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified' (*John* xii. 23). In His great prayer on the evening before His crucifixion He prayed,

'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was' (*John* xvii. 5).

The passage from which the first of these two texts is quoted shows how this glory will be manifested. For He compares Himself to a grain of wheat which only bears fruit if it dies; otherwise 'it abideth by itself alone.' Here our Lord makes His influence depend directly upon His death; because He is to perish, He will be the source of life to others. Only by dying did He in love completely identify himself with us. This does not dispense us from holiness. It requires that by living in



union with Him through faith and the help which He supplies, we should identify ourselves with Him, the Holy One.

**The Holy Communion and the Death of Christ.**—Another great saying of our Lord's teaches that the death of the Messiah is not a disaster to His followers, but a means of the greatest blessing. These are the words that He said when He instituted the Holy Communion. There is a difficulty in determining the precise form of words which He used, for the different accounts of them vary. But the meaning is substantially the same in all. St. Luke writes that our Lord said that His blood was poured out *for you*, St. Mark says *for many*, and St. Matthew says *for many unto remission of sins*. All three evangelists write that our Lord described himself as instituting a 'covenant' or 'new covenant' between God and man. Even the account given in *Mark* xiv. 22-25, short though it is, implies that a unique value is attached to the shedding of Christ's blood. That Jesus should speak of a new covenant would not surprise His disciples, for they must have known that Jeremiah promised such a covenant (xxxix. 31). Also the words 'blood of the covenant' would at once suggest to them the account given in *Exodus* xxiv. 3-8 of the first covenant made by Moses between God and Israel. In this ancient sacrifice the blood offered to God was sprinkled upon the people as a symbol of a life which refreshed their life and so expelled sin and uncleanness. So our Lord's death had a special value about it. For it was the completion of the offering of His life. It was a perfect reparation to God for the heartless disobedience of the human race, offered by the perfect Representative of our race. His death was not the sole deed by which He saves. But to appropriate that death, to hold communion with the Christ who died and lives, is necessary for our forgiveness and our 'life.' We must identify ourselves with Him who died if we are to enjoy the friendship of God.

**Feeding on Christ's flesh and blood.**—Our Lord has taught us how to identify ourselves with Him. This subject will be further considered in our next chapter. Let us here notice that when our Lord instituted the Holy Communion, He described the food of our bodies there given to us as His body and blood. This the disciples



understood to be a food for their souls. Christ prepared them for this belief by a discourse spoken a year before at Capernaum and recorded in *John* vi. This great discourse does not relate solely to the Holy Communion. It is concerned rather with an intercourse and union between Christ and the Christian which culminates in this sacred meal. The idea of a real spiritual feeding on and assimilating the life of God had been present in the minds of Jewish writers who spoke of God's wisdom as given to be 'eaten,' that is, spiritually appropriated. Thus we find in *Ecclus.* xxiv. 19-21, 'They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty.' Besides this line of thought, we find that the Jewish sacrifices repeatedly impressed upon the minds of the worshippers the duty of either feeding on the thing offered to God in sacrifice, or the need of being touched by the blood of the life of an animal dedicated to God. These expressive symbols showed that man must not regard the offering given by him to God as a mere substitute for himself, but must identify himself with the offering and dedicate himself with it.

Our Lord took up these ideas, elevating them to the highest level. This long discourse in St. John contains three sections. The first deals with His own Person (vi. 26-40), the second specially calls attention to His saving work (vi. 41-51), the third deals with that communion with Him which is specially centred in the sacrament of His body and blood. In the first He requires that men should believe in Him as their living Lord, the *bread* given by God to men's souls. In the second He declares that He is the *living* bread, and that He will give His *flesh* for the life of the world. In the third He speaks of the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His *blood*. The flesh and blood do not mean himself merely, but himself as affected by a violent death—a death endured, as He declares, for the life of the world:

'I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world' (*John* vi. 51).

**Conclusion.**—The religious value which our Lord attached to His death was not an afterthought or due to

any change in His plan. The task which He had chosen for himself involved His submission to death. He taught that the new covenant or alliance between God and man included and was based upon the idea of sacrifice. And He saw and taught that this sacrifice was the sacrifice of himself. The importance which He attached to His death is shown in many ways. But it is specially certified to us by the fact that He instituted a special service in commemoration of it, and made the observance of this service binding on His disciples. His death is for the good of others. It is 'for the life of the world'; though, since all will not avail themselves of it, it is 'for many' (*Matt., Mark*). His death is symbolised by the breaking of the bread: and that the death is for the benefit of His disciples is shown by the distribution of this bread, now called by Him His 'body,' to the disciples. He brought mankind nearer to God by using death as He used life, as a means of moral victory through trust in God. And in dying as He did, He revealed God's nature, His nature of holiness and love, by that perfect love of man which enabled Him to feel the whole horror of human sin and yet forgive the sinner. Without this death, God's nature would not have been perfectly disclosed. God was ready to forgive the world when He had proved to the world His love. The Cross teaches us what service we owe to God. And we do more than *learn* what this service means. We can place ourselves under the purifying power of His sacrifice, by repentance and faith, by submission to the Holy Spirit and a right use of the sacraments. As we do so, the Atonement takes effect in each of us individually and we are enabled to live the life of sons of God.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

THE primitive Church rightly placed together the statement of its belief in the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the forgiveness of sins. And we shall therefore in this chapter consider what our Lord taught in reference to the Holy Spirit and the community of persons committed to the Holy Spirit's care, and then briefly deal with part of the more important sacramental teaching of our Lord.

**The Holy Spirit.**—In the Old Testament the work of the Spirit of God, an energy proceeding from God to create, to rule and guide, is frequently mentioned. This Spirit is a principle of life residing in the divine nature and exerted upon the world. In some passages (as *Isaiah* xlviii. 16) this Spirit is almost, if not quite, recognised as a distinct personality, especially in passages where the Spirit and the Word of God are contrasted. In the New Testament far more is said about the Holy Spirit, as He is regarded as the Force which created and sustains the whole Christian Church and every Christian's character. We first notice that our Lord's own life and work are intimately associated with the life and work of the Spirit. In *Matthew* i. 20 and *Luke* i. 35 the birth of Jesus in the world of a Virgin Mother, is expressly attributed to a miraculous intervention of the divine creative Spirit. All the evangelists record that the Spirit descended upon Jesus at His Baptism, the Head of the Church receiving the gift which in *Acts* and the Epistles is described as imparted to His members. By the Spirit He was led into the wilderness to endure the temptations which were to bring them forward to perfection. 'By the Spirit of God' He declared that He himself cast out devils (*Matt.* xii. 28).

**The Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels.**—The Synoptic Gospels record but little of our Lord's teaching about

the relation of the Holy Spirit to the individual. But this little is of great importance. One of the most severe statements of our Lord is this:

‘Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin’ (*Mark* iii. 28, 29).

Some had ascribed His good works to the power of ‘the prince of the devils.’ These men had so far made evil their good as to ascribe good to the source of evil. Such moral depravity is near to sin against the Holy Spirit, whose personal existence is implied by the fact that He can be sinned against. Our Lord does not say that the men to whom He spoke had reached the depth of depravity which makes moral recovery impossible. But His words do imply that the will may become so far identified with evil as to make such a recovery impossible. In the parallel passage in *Matthew* xii. 32 our Lord describes speaking against the Son of Man as a less sin than speaking against the Holy Spirit. This saying fits the circumstances. His hearers at that time might without sin have a very imperfect view of the Messiah’s dignity, and to speak against Him might not be very blameworthy. But every Jew knew that the Holy Spirit was the Spirit of God and, according to their own standard, to speak against Him was the acme of profanity.

To possess the Holy Spirit is to possess a great gift which God desires to impart to His children:

‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ (*Luke* xi. 13).

This Holy Spirit will aid His disciples, and be in them in their time of trial when they are brought before governors and kings for Christ’s sake:

‘But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you’ (*Matt.* x. 19, 20).

So as Jesus himself ‘rejoiced in the Holy Spirit’ (*Luke*

x. 21), the disciples are to rely upon a power which transcends them and yet is to be in them.

The Holy Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels is that divine power which worked in the life of Jesus ; and to understand the Spirit, the whole life and teaching of our Lord must be studied. The fourth Gospel shows how in turn the Spirit interprets Jesus to His Church.

**The Holy Spirit in St. John's Gospel.**—St. John's Gospel contains a full and detailed teaching about the Holy Spirit, who is described under the name of *Paraclete* (*John* xiv. 26). The word *Paraclete* means more than Comforter. It is 'One who is called upon to stand by us, especially in difficulty or conflict.' So one important meaning is that of Advocate, and St. John applies it in this sense to Christ as interceding for us with the Father (*1 John* ii. 1). We can only briefly sketch the outline of our Lord's teaching about the *Paraclete*. It is this :

1. The *Paraclete* 'proceedeth from the Father' (*John* xv. 26). The Father will 'give' Him at the prayer of the Son (*John* xiv. 16), and the Son will 'send' Him (*John* xvi. 7). So the Father and the Son together are responsible for His coming. The Spirit will act as the Champion of the cause of Christ :

'And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement : of sin, because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye behold me no more ; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged' (*John* xvi. 8-11).

The activity of the Spirit will show that the world sinned in not believing in Christ, will testify to the perfect righteousness of Christ as shown by the fact of His triumphant Ascension, and will show by His own spiritual victories that the evil spirit is doomed to condemnation and failure.

2. The Spirit will 'glorify' Jesus.

The Spirit will specially 'glorify' Jesus by enabling the disciples to know more about Jesus, and such things as the Father and the Son will that He shall teach. He is not to speak by His own initiative :

'He shall not speak from himself ; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak . . .

he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you' (*John* xvi. 13, 14).

When the time comes for a deeper apprehension of some aspect of the truth by the Church, the Spirit hears from the Son and teaches the Church. It is then the office of the Holy Spirit, 'the Spirit of truth,' to guide 'into all the truth' (*John* xvi. 13). This development of the knowledge of the truth on the part of the disciples will sometimes be based on a revived remembrance of the teaching of Jesus. 'He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you' (*John* xiv. 26).

3. The Spirit will give to the Christian a share in the life of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is to do more than teach the disciples; He is to give them an actual life-contact with Jesus. Christ will not leave His followers desolate; He will return to them in the coming of the Spirit. St. John in commenting on certain words of Jesus, says, 'The Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified' (*John* vii. 39). The Greek of this verse makes it plain that he does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not exist, but that He was not yet imparted as an inward influence; He did not dwell in man until Jesus was glorified by His Ascension. The Spirit is to come, not to annihilate our personality, but to make it Christian; to come not as a substitute for an absent Christ, but to bring His spiritual presence to us:

'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive: for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also' (*John* xiv. 16-19).

It is in this way that the promises given early in the Gospel were to be fulfilled. For 'life' is the gift of Jesus, a life that outlives death, and destroys sin which is also death. The new birth of the believer is by water and the Spirit, and Jesus says, 'I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly' (*John* x. 10).

Can we explain this difference which we find between the Synoptic Gospels on the one hand and the writings of St. Paul and St. John on the other hand in the degree of prominence which is given to the Holy Spirit? There is an explanation which seems reasonable, but which has not yet received as much attention as it deserves. It is that the Synoptic Gospels do on the whole represent the course of teaching which was given to persons who were preparing for admission into the Christian Church, while the fourth Gospel represents the more developed teaching which was given to those who were already baptized. St. John wrote to deepen the knowledge and faith of Christians (*John* xx. 31), not to give primary instruction. The prevalence of teaching about the Holy Spirit, assumed as something which would be readily understood, in the earliest Epistles of St. Paul, is a fact which requires explanation. And it can only be explained naturally if we believe that the Lord himself had given teaching of the kind recorded by St. John. St. Luke, who wrote *Acts* no less certainly than he wrote our third Gospel, records the words of Jesus Christ:

‘Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth’ (*Acts* i. 8).

And the whole book of *Acts* is a record of the fulfilment of this promise. Previous currents of Jewish thought with regard to the Messiah and the Holy Spirit are not strong and clear enough to account for the rise of a definite belief in the divine personality of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. The belief rests on the teaching of Jesus, not merely Jesus as living in the experience of the Christian Church, but also the Jesus who was historically known and heard.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity.—If St. Paul and St. John have not perverted the teaching of Jesus, and we are right in holding that even in the Synoptic Gospels a divine personality is ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit, then our Lord taught that God is One in Three. He taught the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; though not in the outward form which was given to it by the Councils of the Church in later times,



when it became necessary to explain it in opposition to attempts which were being made to explain it away. Words like 'consubstantial' would not have been intelligible to the first disciples of Jewish race. But Christ taught that the life of God is threefold, and that there are in the life of God those eternal distinctions which we know in Christian experience. The Father 'before the world was' glorified and loved the Son (*John* xvii. 5); and the Spirit which we know as 'the Lord and Giver of life' within us, is the same Spirit that 'anointed' Jesus in His human nature and was active in the creation of the world. God who reveals himself to us as Father and Redeemer and Advocate, is not different in himself from His revelation made to us. There was always in God a Fatherhood and Sonship and united devotion to a personal Being who answers love with love. And the Three are as truly One as our mind and thought and will are one. When St. Paul speaks of 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost' (*2 Cor.* xiii. 14), his language justifies the language of our Nicene Creed. And there is a similar co-ordination of the Father, Son, and Spirit, even in St. Jude, one of the least theological writers of the New Testament (*Jude* 20, 21). God is personal, but also more than personal. There is a Unity which is higher and more ultimate than personality as we know it. To this reality we can fitly give the name of substance. And the doctrine of the Trinity, and that alone, preserves the truth of God's transcendence with the truth of His indwelling presence in the world.

**The Church.**—We have already on p. 61 considered the Church as the outward organised manifestation of the kingdom of God. It is true that it is only recorded that Jesus actually used the word Church on two occasions (*Matt.* xvi. 18; xviii. 15-17). The Greek word corresponds with the Hebrew word *qāhāl*, which was applied to the congregation or community of Israel. There is therefore no difficulty in supposing that our Lord would assume that the Greek or Aramaic word, or both, would be intelligible to His immediate followers. It agreed with His purpose not to destroy, but to fulfil, that the society which He founded should realise what had been imperfectly realised by the Jewish theocracy.

But whether Jesus frequently used the word *qāhāl* or not, He purposed that His followers should form a distinct brotherhood. He called twelve men into a specially close relation with himself, He trained them for the special work of furthering His principles, He commissioned them to preach and heal in His name (*Mark* iii. 13-19; vi. 7-13; *Luke* vi. 12-16). And all the Gospels unite in teaching that our Lord after His resurrection gave to the faithful apostles (i) a world-wide commission, (ii) a command to baptize or proclaim the remission of sins. We have here the nucleus of an organisation, a provision for common belief, common prayer, and common work for God. Not till our Lord ascended and the Holy Spirit was outpoured, was the Church constituted and able to develop its organisation. But our Lord previously collected the material, and made His apostles the foundation stones.

**Jesus Christ with His Church.**—Our Lord promised to be with His Church (a) in *worship*: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (*Matt.* xviii. 20); (b) in the exercise of *authority* over men: 'Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (*Matt.* xviii. 18). To 'bind and loose' is a rabbinical Hebrew phrase for 'forbid and permit.' The Church is to prohibit or allow according as the principles of Christ require. Thus the Church *bound* or forbade the circumcision of Gentile believers, and in later times *loosed* or permitted absolution to be given when a Christian had for a second time fallen into deadly sin. Similarly in *John* xx. 23 our Lord says, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.' In this, as in the previous promise, an assurance is given to the disciples that the actions which are done for the spiritual government and discipline of the Church will be ratified in heaven. (c) The special connection of our Lord's presence with Baptism, by which souls are brought under the power of His 'name' or revealed personality, and the Holy Communion, which is the partaking of His body and blood, will be considered soon. The whole right of the

Church to guide and feed the souls of men rests upon this presence of Christ with her in worship based on a true faith, in government, and in sacraments. This presence of Christ is effected by the Spirit. And our Lord, knowing the great possibilities that are involved in His presence with His Church, prayed to the Father :

‘That they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me’ (*John* xvii. 22, 23).

**Holy Baptism.**—The new revelation of God under the threefold Name, that of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is associated with a new rite :

‘Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost’ (*Matt.* xxviii. 19).

The ‘name’ of God is a Hebrew expression for what God is. Baptism is therefore immersion ‘into’ the Being of God. The divine ‘name’ is the element into which the baptized person is immersed, as the source of all spiritual cleansing. He must henceforth live incorporated in Christ and thus united with God, the words which declare this incorporation being spoken over him when he is baptized, that is, ceremonially washed with water. The state of mind required in the person so baptized is abundantly illustrated from the early Christian belief and practice recorded in the New Testament. He must have faith and repentance. He must believe in the God revealed to Him in Jesus, and he must have a true change of mind in respect of sin, repentance being the first practical effect of faith. God’s response to this faith is the giving of ‘remission’ of sins to the person baptized. So our Lord is described by St. Luke as saying :

‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem’ (*Luke* xxiv. 46, 47).

It was the conviction of the primitive Church that the heart of the Gospel was explained to the Church orally by the risen Christ. The message is a message of

forgiveness, of a remission or 'putting away,' not fictitious but literally true. It is a remission which at once raises the believer to a status of sonship with God, a status won by a living Saviour who imparts His own strength to the baptized believer.

This gift of a new strength comes with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament repeatedly connects the gift of the Holy Spirit with baptism. Our Lord himself spoke of the gift of the Spirit to His disciples as a baptism. 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence' (*Acts* i. 5). After the Holy Spirit came to them on the day of Pentecost, baptism with the Spirit in no way displaced baptism with water. It was regarded as normally coinciding with it (*Acts* ii. 38; ix. 17 ff.). But when the apostles themselves did not baptize and lay hands on the converts, steps were taken to supply the gift. The apostles supplied it by laying hands on those baptized previously (*Acts* viii. 16-17; xix. 1-7).

**Baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus.**—*Acts* viii. 16 is connected with a difficulty concerning baptism itself. It mentions Christians at Samaria who had not received the Holy Ghost, 'only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus' (cf. ii. 38; xix. 5). It was the opinion of some writers of the Middle Ages, and the opinion has been revived in modern times, that when the primitive Church administered baptism, it for a time administered it with the formula 'into the name of the Lord Jesus' and not with the Trinitarian formula found in *Matt.* xxviii. 19. It is just possible that the apostles may have used the Trinitarian formula in baptizing Gentiles and used the other words as a formula in baptizing Jews and Samaritans, or that they replaced the simple formula by the fuller one. But there is no clear evidence to show that the baptismal formula ever consisted of the words 'I baptize thee into the name of the Lord Jesus.' The early Jewish Christian manual known as the *Didaché* clearly says 'Baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in living water.' And the New Testament itself proves that within the lifetime of men who heard our Lord, it was usual to speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together. We conclude therefore that it is most likely that 'to be baptized into the name of

the Lord Jesus' means 'to receive Christian baptism.' It does not denote the use of a rival formula. To be baptized into Christ so as to be incorporated in Him is to be brought into union with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

**The Holy Communion.**—Christianity is in its essence a sacramental religion. It teaches that a divine Spirit, the eternal Son of God, made human nature His own for ever, so as to be always associated in our minds with every thought concerning himself. Material nature is employed to contribute its share towards the whole process of redemption. It is made the vehicle of spiritual life, not cast aside as unspiritual. The early Christians valued this great principle, and their writers constantly maintained it against the decadent pagan theories in which matter was represented as an evil thing. They saw that the idea of the highest spiritual gifts coming to man through material means agrees with the whole method by which God creates and redeems us. The sacred meal instituted by Jesus Christ in remembrance of himself is a great illustration of this method. As such it is in a peculiar degree analogous to the act by which 'the Word was made flesh.' And its very nature simultaneously makes a great appeal to the individual conscience and emphasises the social side of true religion.

Concerning the institution of this meal, to which the Christians at a very early date gave the name of Eucharist or 'thanksgiving,' we have at least three primitive traditions. There is (i) that of St. Mark, apparently familiar to St. Matthew, (ii) that of St. Luke, (iii) that of St. Paul. They are as follows:—

*Mark xiv. 22.*

And as they were eating he took bread, blessed and brake and gave to them and said:

Take:  
this is my body.

And taking a cup he gave thanks and gave to them and they all drank of it: and he said to them:  
This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed on behalf of many.

*Matt. xxvi. 26.*

Now as they were eating Jesus took bread and blessed and brake and giving to the disciples said:

Take, eat:  
this is my body.

And taking a cup he gave thanks and gave to them saying:  
Drink ye all of it:  
for this is my blood of the covenant which for many is shed for remission of sins.

We may next compare the accounts of St. Luke and his friend St. Paul:

*Luke xxii. 17.*

*And he received a cup and gave thanks and said: Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink from now of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God come.*

And he took bread and gave thanks and brake and gave to them saying:

This is my body  
which is given on your behalf:  
do this unto my remembrance.

Also the cup likewise after supper, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, this which on your behalf is shed.

*1 Cor. xi. 23.*

He took bread and gave thanks and brake and said:

This is my body  
which is on your behalf:  
do this unto my remembrance.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood;

do this, as oft as ye drink it,  
unto my remembrance.

In spite of the evidence of some manuscripts, there is good reason for thinking that St. Luke wrote as above. The mention of the first cup, in the passage which is here printed in italics, can be explained. In the time of our Lord the Jewish Passover feast, which commemorated the deliverance of the Israelites from the power of the Egyptians, included the drinking of four cups of wine mixed with water. The third cup was called 'the cup of blessing,' and this was the cup which Jesus gave as His blood. St. Paul actually calls the sacramental cup 'the cup of blessing' (1 Cor. x. 16). And the first cup mentioned by St. Luke is not sacramental, but part of the ordinary Passover meal.

**Holy Communion and the Passover.**—The best authorities in the early Church agree with St. John in maintaining that our Lord did not eat a Passover lamb, but died on the day when the Passover lambs were killed. The last supper which He ate with His disciples was therefore not identical with the Jewish feast and was eaten a night earlier. But it was nevertheless a Passover. It included all the most sacred associations of the ancient rite. Our Lord expressly calls it 'this Passover.' And



it was accompanied by the use of the same thin unleavened bread, the same wine mingled with water, the same 'sop' or mixture of bitter herbs, bread and vinegar, which was eaten to recall the mortar of the bricks made in Egypt, and followed by the singing of the same Psalms. Like the Passover this service denoted deliverance accompanied by sacrifice, and like the Passover it included communion, the sharing of a common sacred meal. More than this, it inaugurated a 'new covenant,' which is a transfigured renewal of the covenant made between God and the Israelites by the sacrifice offered at Sinai (*Exod.* xxiv. 6-8). And it also fulfilled in a spiritualised form the Jewish expectation of the feast to be given in the kingdom of the Messiah to His people. Thus the symbols of a feast are treated by our Lord as equally the symbols of a covenant made by the shedding of sacrificial blood.

St. John's Gospel does not record the institution of the Eucharist, any more than it mentions the institution of Christian baptism. Instead of this the third chapter lays peculiar emphasis on the necessity of a new birth by water and the Spirit, and the sixth chapter on the necessity of feeding on the flesh and blood of Christ. These two chapters deal with those great truths which underlie the doctrine of these two sacraments. And by insisting upon the need of the Christian's intimate union with the divine life which He himself possesses, Jesus declared His intention of communicating to His Church His own human life. He expressly guarded His words against any gross or materialistic explanation, by lifting the minds of His hearers upward to heaven. His words imply that heaven is His true home, and that after the Ascension it will not be possible for His disciples to think that He had intended that they should feed upon His flesh and blood in a manner recognised by the outward senses. But He nevertheless teaches that the whole Christ becomes the living bread to each Christian.

**Summary of Eucharistic doctrine.**—It is not our purpose here to describe later theological explanations of the Lord's Supper, but to call attention to what our Lord's words obviously imply as recorded by the evangelists and St. Paul.

(i) The bread and wine are identified with Christ's



body and blood, so that the disciples of our Lord feed on His life. It is the life which He receives from the Father, and that life incarnate and offered in death.

(ii) The Lord's Supper or Eucharist is a service which He commanded to be repeated.

(iii) The separate giving of the bread as the body of Christ, and giving of the wine as His blood, are symbolic of the separation of His body and blood on Calvary. They therefore represent the sacrificial death which sealed the 'new covenant' between God and man.

(iv) The Lord's Supper is a means of strengthening corporate unity between believers. In feeding upon the same divine sacrifice they themselves become more truly 'one body.'

## CHAPTER X

### OUR LORD'S TEACHING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD

THE teaching of Jesus contains important prophecies with regard to the future of Jerusalem, the future and end of the world and of man.

There are some serious problems connected with these prophecies. The different evangelists lay stress on somewhat different aspects of the events predicted by Christ, and there is sometimes some confusion in the record of what He taught. But on investigation that teaching can be seen to be a living and organic whole, and the scheme of it can be intelligently grasped.

**The end of Jerusalem.**—Among the oldest portions of our Gospels are certain predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem. For example :

‘Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles ; and some of them they shall kill and persecute ; that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation ; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary : yea, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation’  
(*Luke xi. 49-51*).

Later, on the occasion of His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, we are told how, as He approached the city, He wept over it and said :

‘For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation

(*Luke xix 43, 44*)

He also more definitely foretold the destruction of the Temple (*Mark* xiii. 2). And He warned those who were in Judæa to flee into the mountains when the city should become surrounded by the invading armies (*Luke* xxi. 20). He also said that God would destroy the evil 'husbandmen' of His vineyard, and 'give the vineyard unto others' (*Mark* xii. 9). All this was fulfilled. The Romans in A.D. 70, within the lifetime of many who saw and heard Jesus, destroyed both the city and the Temple. The Temple was never rebuilt; an effort made three hundred years later by the Emperor Julian to rebuild it proved abortive. The Jewish propaganda among the heathen practically came to an end in the second century, being supplanted by Christian missionary enterprise.

**The Future Coming of our Lord.**—It is far more difficult to determine exactly what our Lord taught with regard to His future coming, and more especially the time of that coming. After the instruction which He gave to the disciples when He sent them forth to teach and to heal, we find in *Matthew* a discourse upon the dangers which they will encounter. In the midst of it comes the saying:

- (1) 'But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come' (*Matt.* x. 23).

It is almost certain that the evangelist, in accordance with his usual custom, has here grouped together sayings of our Lord according to their subject, and not according to the order of time in which they were spoken. Part of these sayings belong to a late period in our Lord's ministry. The tribulations here foretold belong to a time subsequent to the Ascension, not a time before the Crucifixion. The parallel passage in *Mark* xiii. 9-13 shows that the evangelisation of 'all the nations' is to accompany these troubles. It is therefore possible that our Lord is warning His apostles that they will not succeed in converting the Jews before His visible personal return. But it is more likely that He refers to an invisible return by which His power will be manifested.

- (2) A second important passage is in *Mark*:

- (a) 'For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful genera-

tion, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. (b) And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there be some here of them that stand by, which shall in nowise taste of death, till they see *the kingdom of God come with power*' (*Mark* viii. 38-ix. 1).

Clause (a) above in all three Synoptists refers to the final judgment, and *Matthew* here represents our Lord as saying that He 'will render unto every man according to his deeds.'

As for clause (b), the parallel passage in *Luke* agrees with *Mark*, as it similarly speaks of 'the kingdom of God' (*Luke* ix. 26, 27). But *Matt.* xvi. 28 replaces the words about the coming of the kingdom by 'till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.' The fact that the earliest evangelist, St. Mark, is here supported by St. Luke, makes it very doubtful if our Lord on this occasion spoke of His final personal coming as happening in the lifetime of the bystanders, even if the first evangelist really thought so.

(3) Another important passage is our Lord's answer to the question of the high priest on the night of His trial :

'Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am : and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven'

(*Mark* xiv. 61, 62).

In *Matt.* xxvi. 64 the statement is varied by the insertion of 'Henceforth' before 'ye shall see.' In *Luke* xxii. 69 the verse appears in a somewhat easier form, and the words about 'coming' are omitted. Thus, according to all the Synoptists, our Lord definitely told the high priest of His future glory. Possibly He connected this with a 'coming,' though not His final coming.

(4) In addition to this answer given by our Lord to the high priest, we find in *Matt.* xxiv. 29-31, *Mark* xiii. 24-27, *Luke* xxi. 25-28, unanimous agreement to the effect that the Son of Man would come after a period of great tribulation which is described by the evangelists, and specially the first evangelist, in close connection

with the fall of Jerusalem. In *Matthew* we find these words :

‘ But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken : and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory ’ (*Matt.* xxiv. 29, 30).

This seems to be the final coming as in *Matt.* xvi. 27 ; *Mark* viii. 38 ; *Luke* ix. 26.

Short summary of the above evidence.—The principal facts which the first three Gospels present in connection with our Lord’s second coming are these : (1) According to *Matthew* Jesus said that He would come before His disciples had finished visiting the cities of Israel ; the other two Gospels only describe this coming as a coming of the kingdom or reign of God. (2) According to *Matthew*, some of the bystanders who heard our Lord would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom ; the other two Gospels again speak of this as a coming of the kingdom of God, though they mention the visible return of the Son in the previous verse. (3) In *Matthew* and *Mark* our Lord is described as telling the high priest that He would see the Son of man ‘ coming ’ ; in *Luke* this statement merely appears as a statement of the Son’s glory in heaven. The evidence of *Matthew* and *Mark* is here fuller and perhaps more primitive than that of *Luke*. (4) All the Synoptists speak of a final return which *Matthew* connects closely with the fall of Jerusalem, and *Luke* postpones till somewhat later (*Luke* xxi. 24, but cf. xxi. 32).

The evidence of *St John’s Gospel*.—It has often been observed that in *St. John’s Gospel* there seems to be less said about the future resurrection, future coming of our Lord and future Judgment, than in the Synoptic Gospels. *St. John* does not spiritualise these great events away, but he emphasises the truth that there is a judgment executed upon every man, and indeed by every man upon himself when he comes into contact with Christ (ix. 39 ; cf. v. 24). He records the teaching of our

Lord that there would be a coming of himself in the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would unite the disciples with Christ. 'I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more, but ye behold me' (*John* xiv. 19). He lays stress, like St. Paul, on that resurrection which takes place in this present life when a man accepts Christ as his Lord. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live' (*John* v. 25). There is in St. John's Gospel an almost entire absence of those elements which surround the day of judgment in the Jewish apocalypses, a judgment attended by a glorious outward display, such as is definitely though briefly mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels. Nevertheless, St. John does record that our Lord spoke of coming again in a personal sense. He promised, 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will receive you unto myself' (*John* xiv. 3). He says with regard to every man who believes on Him and eats His flesh and drinks His blood, that He 'will raise him up at the last day' (*John* vi. 39, 40, 44, 54). In a similar way, He gives to Martha a wider view of the resurrection, but He does not tell her that she is wrong when she says, 'I know that he [Lazarus] shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day' (*John* xi. 24). Immediately after speaking of the spiritual resurrection, He speaks of 'all that are in the tombs' coming forth 'unto the resurrection of life' or 'the resurrection of judgement' (*John* v. 29). And in a manner which recalls the teaching of both the Jewish apocalypses and the Synoptists, our Lord says that 'The Father gave him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of man' (*John* v. 27). These passages show that the teaching about 'the last day' in St. John's Gospel, though brief, agrees with the Synoptists.

**An unwarrantable interpretation.**—It is sometimes held by writers who oppose the Christian faith that Jesus prophesied His early return in a visible form to judge finally the world. He expected something which never happened. He thought that the kingdom of God would be suddenly established as the Jews expected, and that He would come again in glory to establish it in a few years' time, or less. This theory implies, and is intended

to suggest, that our Lord was an erring man, and not what Christians believe Him to be, 'The Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

**Conclusion as to the Second Coming.**—The above interpretation is in conflict with a large part of the evidence which we have. It supposes that St. John's Gospel is fictitious. It also directly opposes various passages in the Synoptists. They show that our Lord anticipated a long interval before His visible return. The parables of the Mustard Seed, the Wheat and the Tares, and the Drag-net, imply that the consummation of the kingdom is in the future. Further, a period of grace is to be given to the Gentiles during which they may learn the truth (*Matt.* xxi. 41; cf. *Luke* xxi. 24). And the Gospel has to be preached to all the world before the end comes (*Matt.* xxiv. 14, xxvi. 13, xxviii. 19).

The true explanation, supported by both the Synoptists and St. John, is to be found in the fact that He spoke of various 'days of the Son of man' (*Luke* xvii. 22). In accordance with the teaching of the Jewish prophets, He taught that there were days of partial and preliminary judgment, involving a final judgment in the future. The final judgment day will come suddenly like the flash of lightning across the sky, and like the flood in the days of Noah (*Luke* xvii. 24 ff.). But there are other epochs in His coming as in the development of His kingdom. His doctrine of His advent and His judgment corresponds with His doctrine of the kingdom. Just as the kingdom has a visible as well as an invisible existence, so it is with His coming. But there was a tendency in the early Church to interpret our Lord's words about His different 'days' or comings as predictions of the one outward final advent. Thus in *Matthew* we find the coming to judgment at the fall of Jerusalem confused with the final judgment, which is represented as 'immediately after the tribulation' (*Matt.* xxiv. 29). St. Jerome and St. Augustine long ago observed the confusion in the report of this eschatological discourse. It corresponds with that expectation of the immediate outward return of Christ which we find in the earlier Epistles of St. Paul, who seems to have made the same mistake.

No difficulty is occasioned by our Lord's prophecy to



the high priest, whichever report of His words be the most correct. Our Lord's reign did begin out of the apparent defeat which He encountered when condemned by the high priest. The vision in Daniel is a vision of the holy element in Israel personified in 'one like unto a Son of man' and supplanting the dominion of those beasts which embody the empires of this world. So at the hour of His death God glorified His Son, and the Son of Man received 'an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' (*Dan.* vii. 14). The subsequent history of Christianity has shown that our Lord did not err in anticipating this victory.

To sum up: our Lord did declare that the kingdom of God would come in power, and that He would come within the lifetime of some of His hearers, meaning by this His return in spiritual force and in the crises of history. He also foretold that He would return finally with visible glory after a long interval of time. The early Jewish Christians to some extent confused His different sayings with regard to these 'days' of coming, and the evangelists show traces of this confusion.

**The Resurrection.**—In one passage in the Synoptic Gospels the resurrection is specially considered (*Matt.* xxii. 23-33; *Mark* xii. 18-27; *Luke* xx. 27-40).

The Sadducees denied the resurrection. And in the above passage they endeavour to make our Lord and the doctrine of the resurrection simultaneously appear ridiculous. They come and put to Him this question: If a woman should be married to seven brothers successively, to which of the seven would she belong after the resurrection? In His answer Jesus showed that the question rested on two false assumptions: (1) the false idea that God either could not or would not provide for men a mode of life suited to their new conditions; and (2) the false idea that in the next world such relations as those of marriage would be maintained. He then refuted their denial of the resurrection by referring to their own Scriptures:

'Have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not

the God of the dead, but of the living : ye do greatly err' (*Mark* xii. 26).

The deeply religious meaning attached to the word 'life' in the Bible, and the truth, gradually dawning in the Old Testament, that fellowship with God can only be ended by man's sin, must be borne in mind by the reader of this saying. The patriarchs' faith in God was life-bringing, and such life is eternal, for it is contact with the eternal God. The argument used by our Lord might be interpreted to imply only the immortality of the soul. But the Jews who had come to believe in the immortality of the soul had by this time also come to believe in the resurrection of the body. And Christ assumes in His answer that for man a merely bodiless existence is not real life.

The blessedness of the future life is implied in the parallel passage in *Luke* xx. 35, 36, where our Lord speaks of those 'that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead . . . they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.' And elsewhere those who have deserted their earthly possessions for His sake are promised both a 'hundredfold' now in this present time, a 'hundredfold' of spiritual relationships and goods, 'and in the world to come eternal life' (*Mark* x. 30). Whereas the future life, properly so called, belongs only to the righteous; that life which is a judgment, being the state of the sinner left to his sin and separated from all good, will be the fate of the wicked :

'The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgement'

(*John* v. 29).

**The Judgment.**—Jesus declared that He was the Judge of man. In moral questions He spoke as the Judge who lays down or voices the law of motive and conduct, who also rebukes or forgives. In St. John's Gospel we find that He represents a judgment of men as proceeding during His ministry. 'Now is the judgement of this world'; 'Yea, and if I judge, my judgement is true'; 'For judgement came I into this world' (*John* xii. 31;

viii. 16; ix. 39). Contact with the truth compels a man to accept it or neglect it: 'And this is the judgement, that the light is come into this world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil' (*John* iii. 19). This continuous present judgment will terminate in a future judgment. One is quite compatible with the other. Judgment is long, thorough, and comprehensive. And it will be no external or capricious judgment which will be passed at the end. Jesus, as we saw, said that all judgment had been committed to 'the Son' (*John* v. 22, 23). But nevertheless He said, 'He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him at the last day' (*John* xii. 48). That is, a man is judged by His own attitude towards the sayings of Jesus. It is the same law as prevails in our use or misuse of nature. Fire or water may be the means of saving a man's life. But if he uses them wrongly he will be burnt to death or drowned. Each man causes his own judgment, though that judgment will finally be pronounced by Jesus Christ.

**Principles of the Judgment.**—Various parables show us what principles will regulate the final judgment. By repeated teaching and a wealth of illustration our Lord impressed upon His disciples that they must *watch and be morally ready for His coming*. As the final coming will be unexpected, untiring vigilance is necessary:

'If the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through. Be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh'

(*Luke* xii. 39, 40).

Christ did not tell His disciples when His final return would take place. He even says that 'the Son' himself does not know the day and hour (*Matt.* xxiv. 36; *Mark* xiii. 32). Our duty is to 'watch and pray' (*Matt.* xxvi. 41; *Mark* xiii. 33).

All the servants of Christ (*Luke* xii. 35-38) are to be as prepared for His coming as the official of the Church 'whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season' (*Matt.* xxiv. 45; *Mark* xiii. 34). All are required to show vigilance and a

strictly faithful observance of their duty. Their minds must never be immersed in worldly pleasure. The parable of the *Ten Virgins* (Matt. xxv. 1-13) bears upon this subject, and is explained by our Lord himself. The Virgins are the members of 'the kingdom of heaven.' The Bridegroom is Jesus Christ coming to call them to His marriage feast. He lingers, and all sleep. It seems to be suggested that all need rest, even the Wise Virgins. But the Wise have procured oil, and they have only to trim their lamps when the sudden cry which heralds the Bridegroom's coming wakes them from their sleep. They rested with an undercurrent of expectation. The Foolish Virgins rested unprepared and unequipped, and were shut out from the feast. The parable of the *Talents* (Matt. xxv. 14-30) and that of the *Pounds* (Luke xix. 11-27) insist again upon the necessity of faithful honest work. In the parable of the Talents we are shown that though *unequal gifts* are given by God to different men, He demands the same diligence from every one. The sin of the wicked servant was simply that he was too slothful and too cowardly to use his own talent. In the parable of the Pounds we are shown that when God gives *the same gift* to different men, He expects all to make such use of it as they honestly can. One may gain ten and another five pounds; but the man who makes no effort to gain anything will lose all.

Watchfulness, fidelity, hard work, are some of the principles by which we shall be judged. To these we must add entire sincerity in our Christianity. It will not be enough to plead that we 'did eat and drink' in our Lord's presence, or to say that He did 'teach in our streets': in spite of this plea He may say, 'I know not whence ye are' (Luke xiii. 27). It will not even be enough to say that we have prophesied in His name or done 'many mighty works' (Matt. vii. 22). For to be known by Jesus and confessed by Him as being His, it is necessary to have His spirit:

'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his

life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?' (*Matt.* xvi. 24-26).

Just as our Lord did not tell His disciples when the day of judgment would be, but told them to watch; so He acted when asked, 'Lord, are they few that be saved?' (*Luke* xiii. 23). His answer was an exhortation to strenuous endeavour: 'Strive to enter in by the narrow door.'

As the life of the saved will be supremely blessed, so the existence of those who have 'forfeited' their life by sin will be supremely sad. 'The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father' (*Matt.* xiii. 43). The wicked will be cast into 'Gehenna.' This was originally the name of the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where idolatrous Israelites used to sacrifice their children to the god Moloch, and where in later times dead bodies were cast for cremation. In our Lord's time it was applied to the place of final punishment for the wicked. This place is also described as 'the furnace of fire' (*Matt.* xiii. 42), 'the eternal fire' (*Matt.* xviii. 8), 'the unquenchable fire' (*Mark* ix. 43), the place 'where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched' (*Mark* ix. 48), 'the outer darkness' where there is 'the weeping and gnashing of teeth' (*Matt.* viii. 12, xiii. 42, etc.). Punishment in Gehenna is not described by our Lord as temporary or remedial. It is directly contrasted with entering into life (*Matt.* xviii. 8). So in *Matt.* xxv. 46, 'eternal punishment' is the alternative destiny to 'eternal life.' To translate the Greek word for 'eternal' as though it meant only 'belonging to the world to come,' seems to overlook the permanent nature of life in perfect union with God. But whereas our Lord's words compel us to believe that a man's future doom is fixed for good or evil by his choice in this present life, they seem to leave room for a diminution of suffering in the future world. In *Jude* 7 the cities of the Plain are said to have suffered 'the punishment of eternal fire,' where the words mean not that the fire was permanent, but that its effects were permanent. So when our Lord speaks of 'eternal fire' (*Matt.* xviii. 8; xxv. 41), it is possible that He only means a fire the results of which are a permanent loss of good. That there are different degrees of punishment is shown in *Matt.* xi. 22, 24; *Luke* xii. 47, 48. But so far as we are able to see, our

Lord used the strongest words which the language of the time afforded for describing the intense misery of those who wilfully reject the love of God.

**The Judgment of the Heathen.**—The most striking contrast between the teaching of the Jews and the teaching of our Lord with regard to the future judgment, is that the Jews regarded it as primarily a triumph of the accepted Israelites over the rejected Gentiles, and our Lord taught that it is essentially religious and ethical. The Father's love is so great that it is not His will that *one* of His little ones should perish (*Matt.* xviii. 14). At the last day it will be shown that those who have not known our Lord consciously, but have been true to the light which they had, will be saved. In a solemn and magnificent description of the judgment, 'all the nations' are represented as gathered before the throne of the Son of Man :

'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

'Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

'And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me' (*Matt.* xxv. 34-40).

This picture, like other word pictures of our Lord, does not mention every feature of the subject described. But it does give a just test and one of universal application. And the above interpretation agrees with the teaching of St. John that there is a 'light which lighteth every man coming into the world' (*John* i. 9), and with the teaching of St. Paul that Gentiles may 'shew the

work of the law written in their hearts . . . their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them ; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my Gospel, by Jesus Christ' (*Rom.* ii. 15, 16).

Paradise.—'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise' (*Luke* xxiii. 43). These words of comfort spoken to a dying thief, unbaptized but repentant, ignorant but able to call Jesus 'Lord,' possess a wealth of meaning. They first tell us the wideness of God's mercy, but they also tell us of something more. The word Paradise or 'park' was applied by the Jews of later times to the garden of Eden and to a blessed state in another world. Our Lord probably used it as best fitted to the understanding of the penitent malefactor. And it should mean for us more than for him. It tells us of a scene of life and rest, of nearness to Jesus, and therefore nearness to God. It tells us of a state which is without that full glory which 'the sons of the resurrection' will reach. But it is 'peace beginning to be,' and it is 'with Christ.'



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